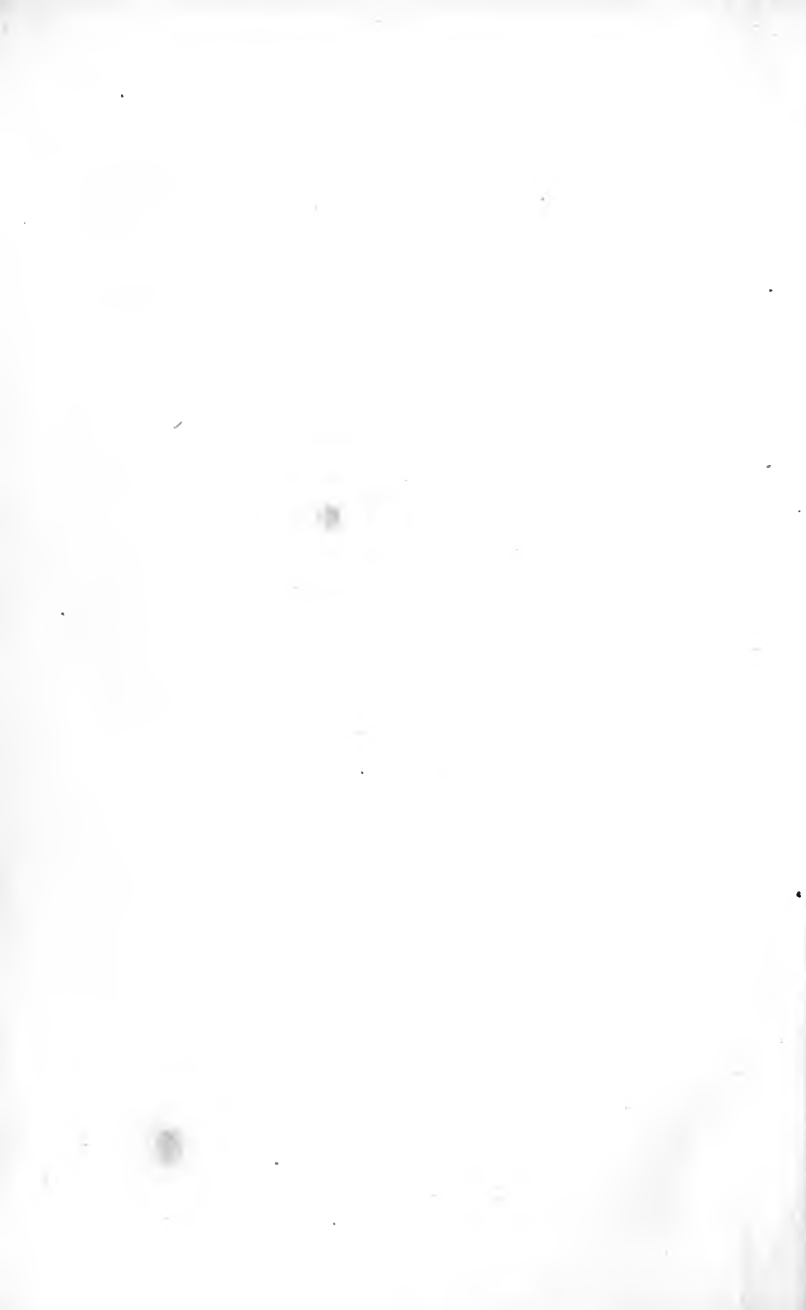






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THE
ORPHAN GIRLS:

A Tale of Southern Life..

BY
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OF MISSISSIPPI.

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THE CREOLE ORPHANS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was morning in the tropics; a bright and sunny day in Kingston. The soft breeze came sweeping across the bay, and wafted the scent of a thousand beds of flowers toward the city, till the very air seemed heavy with aromatic softness. The crowd was moving with characteristic laziness along the awning-covered street, and the cafés and restaurants were receiving their daily influx of visitors, of many nations and languages.

Among them might be observed a noble-looking gentleman, who, sauntering quietly along, and apparently without any other especial object than to kill time, turned into one of those gorgeously fitted-up saloons which are most frequented by the English and Americans.

Giving himself up to the favorite habit of so many of our countrymen, he threw himself into a large arm-chair, of which there were many standing about on the nicely-sanded floor, and turned his inquiring gaze around. There were many like himself seated, silently smoking, and, to all appearance, having no more *to do*

than he. The attentive waiter suddenly came toward him and handed him the morning paper. He was soon absorbed in its contents. Rapidly his eye glanced over its columns, and he was about to throw it aside, when the following notice attracted his attention. It was at the end of an auction advertisement.

"There will also be sold, at the same time and place, a beautiful Quadroon girl of sixteen years. She is a superior sempstress and hair-dresser."

"I will go and see this paragon," he exclaimed, as he laid down the sheet; and, rising, he walked to the door with a wearied air.

Eleven o'clock, and the commercial Exchange. Its capacious rooms were the daily resort of the man of business and the man of leisure, of those who had property to dispose of, and those who wished to become purchasers. Here was the meeting-place; here were the sales of slaves and other valuable property; the distribution of successions, and the receptacle of news from all parts of the world. The individual, whom we have noticed, entered the doors of the building with the throng and cast his eyes around. The sale of landed property had commenced, but he heeded it slightly. At length the slaves were put up for sale. *This* attracted him but little. The auctioneer paused.

"Now, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "here we have something to bid on; a nice parcel of goods, and such a one as you don't get every day. Come, hand her up! A beautiful *Quadroon* girl, fit for a lady's maid, or traveling companion. Ha! ha! Who will bid? Who *won't* bid? Here she is," he added, as he received, from a dark aperture behind the stand, the light form of a female, who was shoved violently forward

by some unseen hand. She was clothed in a plain black dress, and, as she advanced, was evidently weeping violently, with her face hidden in her hands. The vendor ordered her to look up. She obeyed him with a shudder, and gazed around. She was young and fair, but pale ; and her eyes were swollen with weeping. Pallid and tottering, she stood before the multitude, who hushed their conversation, struck by her exceeding beauty. Another moment, and a universal murmur arose from the assembly, as they looked upon her in wonder and curiosity. She trembled violently, and then her countenance exhibited the most intense mental anguish, as she stood the inspection of the crowd of upturned faces ; and several times she seemed on the point of crying out with concealed agony.

Surprise rooted the multitude to the spot ; they knew not what to think ; yet there was the owner, a heavy, thickset man, with a ferocious countenance and a glaring eye, which seemed to exercise a basilisk influence over the poor girl, who, every now and then, stole a glance of terror toward him. She was unlike a slave ; yet there was her master, (she did not deny him), the vendor ; and, above all, there was the pure, rich olive complexion of the quadroon. She is a slave, and is here for sale, for she denies it not. Yet she is lighter in color than the Indian Quadroons. Still she is a slave. Bids were now tendered, reservedly at first, but they increased in spirit until the competition became general. The amount increased until it was enormous. The poor girl turned a supplicating look around ; her eyes met those of our friend, who had been drawn up to the stand by the excitement. That look told a tale of sadness ; it struck his heart, and he gazed at her with pity, and bid on her again ; and

again was the sum increased, and still he bravely stood there bidding on. At length the offers dropped off, and he and a low, wrinkled debauchee were the sole competitors. A few more passes, and a smile of scorn curled his lip, as he saw the look of anxiety in the face of his antagonist give place to one of deep and intense hatred and rage as he gave in, and surrendered, while the prize was knocked down to his antagonist. The stranger stepped to the office, and received the young girl as she staggered and fell into his arms. She had fainted; and, as he bore her out, the clink of the gold he had paid sounded louder than the din of human voices.

A few weeks saw the fair young slave placed on board a packet bound for the city of New Orleans.

CHAPTER II.

TO one of those quaintly-fashioned houses, away down in the heart of the first municipality in New Orleans, and built long ago in old Spanish times, I beg the reader to accompany me.

We approach the house. It stands in a recess, back from the street, and, up the columns of the portico, is a perfect wilderness of cypress and madeira vines.

We ascend the ancient steps composed of the marble of France, and pause at the dark, old door. At the summons of the lion-headed knocker, which seems to have stood the storms of a century, the door opens and we are at once admitted. To the right is the parlor, and this room we invite the reader also to enter.

This apartment was furnished in a sumptuous manner. It was large and spacious. A rich carpet covered the floor, and the dark, heavy furniture was of an antique pattern and after the style of Louis Sixteenth. A French piano was the only modern article in the room. A massive gilt cornice and an elaborately carved center-piece gave a finished and beautiful effect to the whole. The walls were ornamented with several very fine paintings. One, a landscape by Claude Lorraine; one by Teniers; a young girl by Rubens, and a copy of Michael Angelo's Virgin and child. This collection, with a number of antique statuettes on the mantle, and a bust of Napoleon, ex-

hibited in the occupants of this mansion a refined and exalted taste. There were many richly bound volumes also scattered about.

Turn we now to the person who was seated in a massive oak chair, near the glowing fire. The evening was cool, for it was late in the season; and the flame danced merrily up the chimney, and roared and crackled as the coal split and burst into fragments, emitting jets of bright gas, darting hither and thither as if in glee. He was, as we have said, seated in a large chair leaning back; his feet stretched out on a stool—the very personification of ease and comfort. He held in his hand a newspaper, and around him strewn the floor were many more, some half opened, and others wrapped up as if just received, while others were wide open, as if hastily glanced at, and then carelessly thrown aside. The fragrance of a Havana cigar filled the room, and the pale blue smoke curled gently over his head. There was nothing remarkable in the appearance of the individual. He seemed about forty years of age. A high and intellectual brow, a straight nose of the true Grecian style, and an oval face, distinguished him as a very handsome man, while the thick curly chestnut locks around his white forehead gave a manly cast to his countenance. He had dark hazel eyes, which gleamed softly and pensively, as he lifted them from the paper and, ever and anon, gazed intently in the fire. As he thus looked steadily, a quiet smile of contentment played around his lips, which were full and finely chiseled. But you could see that there was a cast about his mouth and chin, which seemed to denote a want of firmness of purpose. He was in stature, over the middle height, and nobly and elegantly formed. But there was an expression

which stamped the whole features and denoted a mind satisfied with itself and the world.

It may be that our readers do not recognize the stranger of the café of Kingston, the purchaser of the Quadroon girl; but it was he. Charles Ormond, for such was his name, was a man who had lived to the age of forty, and never made an enemy. He was an easy, quiet person, who never troubled himself about the affairs of his neighbors; nay, not even his own affairs; but it seemed as if fortune smiled on him, and blessed the "even tenor of his way," for, if he did not *add* to his large property, he held his own and enjoyed life to its full. He had many years previously come to the South from Maryland with his father, who died, leaving his son a valuable plantation and a large force of negroes on the Mississippi river in Louisiana.

Colonel Ormond (for he held a Colonel's commission in the militia) divided his time between his residence in the city and his plantation, on which he lived during the rolling season. He was a bachelor. An affair of the heart many years before with a Creole girl stifled his energy and killed his matrimonial aspirations, and he never found sufficient courage to replace the ideal with the real.

He remained for some minutes in the comfortable position in which we have found him, and then, starting from his reverie suddenly, he took from the mantle a small bell, and gently rung it.

In reply to the summons, a servant appeared bearing lights, and, closing the shutters, proceeded to arrange the tea table with two seats. As the table was drawn up to the fire and a light Indian bamboo chair placed at its side, Colonel Ormond seemed to be aroused by the sound of a singularly sweet voice from

the adjoining room, and, in a moment more, a light footstep pressed the soft carpet by his side. His eyes lighted up with a smile of pleasure, as he glanced around and his gaze fell upon the form of a beautiful woman, of some twenty-five or six years of age.

She was of that clear, olive complexion, which, although it plainly told that she might have a tinge of African blood, yet also showed that it was far removed. Her form was of that voluptuous, flowing mould, whose every action is grace, and it expressed the deep, yet hidden fires, which burned within a shrine as pure as a vestal's. Her eyes were large and dazzling, and as ebon as her hair, which was braided simply around a smooth brow and ornamented with a single moss-rose. Her features were regular and classic. As she entered the room, a smile illuminated her beautiful face and showed her pearly teeth. She advanced to Colonel Ormond, and, sinking on the stool, gazed a moment at him, and then threw her arms around his neck. He leaned over, pressed her beautiful head to his breast and imprinted many kisses on her brow and lips. She leaned across his knee—

"Ah! Ormond," she said, "I have a terrible quarrel for you."

"What now?" he laughingly replied.

"Did you not promise me when you left after dinner, that you would return at once? But you had to go up town, and in some snug little corner you had your wine and cigar, and a quiet game of chess."

"Well, Marie," he answered, "I must plead guilty; what is the punishment?"

"Well let me see, I must deprive you of your wine for a whole week."

"I submit; but now let me ask you—how do you

find the city, after so long a sojourn on the plantation?"

"Oh! Charles, I hate a city life, and you know it; I love the country; but, when you are with me, I even love the city more."

"You are a flatterer, Marie," he said, playfully tapping her cheek with a folded newspaper.

"But I have long determined not to keep up two establishments; we will sell the house in town, and then we will live altogether in the country."

"Oh! I should be so glad," she replied enthusiastically. "I will then take a pleasure in domestic affairs, I will attend to the poultry and dairy and garden."

"Oh! yes, love in a cottage; but you forget—where are Zoe and Estelle."

She smiled rapturously at the mention of those names, and darted from the room.

He gazed after her a moment, sighed and shook his head. "Beautiful creature!" he said, "you are a treasure to any man. Why should I hesitate a moment longer in giving you my name, when you have so long had my heart; you, who are so good, so pure and so kind to all? The law will not sanction a marriage in Louisiana, yet for *your* sake should I seek another state: yet—yet, the feeling. That dark tinge from Africa—can it be so, a Quadroon! As to the sin of living so in this pseudo-marital manner—that is for churchmen to decide. There are many who do it. It is custom, and custom calls it honorable. Yet I owe it to her; to her whose heart is as warm as the sunbeams of her own bright isle. I owe it to my children, the cherubs with their soft warm smile, and happy laugh, and loving kiss. I owe it to them, and I'll do them justice at any rate. Well, well—I'll think of it; I love Ma

rie truly; for her noble gratitude and true womanly kindness; yet I had thought my heart would ever rebel against such a sentiment as love." Here he sighed, as reminiscences of "lang sync" came across his memory; and he soon relapsed into his former musings. And now while our scene is thus disposed, we will enter into an explanation and make a portion of the following story more plain to the reader.

Marie St. Vallé was a native of the island of Martinique. She told Ormond that she was a *Quadroon*, and that her father was a French officer, who was stationed and died at Port Royal of yellow fever. It was said that she was a *slave*, and, after the death of her protector, she came into the possession of a relative of his, who, knowing the relation they bore to each other, never urged his claim of ownership with the remainder of the property; but suffered her to retain it and act as if she were regularly emancipated.

Marie's mother, at the instigation of her friends, now sent her to Paris to be educated at a convent.

She was at that time but six years of age. Here she remained until she was ten, when her mother determined to remove to Paris and left Martinique to visit France. When some two weeks at sea, the vessel was wrecked, and poor little Marie was an orphan with no one to protect her, no friend to guide her footsteps in a world, set with snares for one so young and innocent.

This was the story which Ormond had ever believed as told by Marie; and she repeated it from the lips of an old woman who claimed her as an aunt after her return to Martinique.

When the news of the loss of the vessel, which reached Martinique in due time, was known, the reput-

ed aunt, a Quadroon, who resided on the island, at once removed Marie to her home.

As time passed, there were many admirers of the young and beautiful girl, and, among them, several young men of wealth on the island. There was also an Englishman, who was said to be a merchant in Jamaica—but whom others boldly stated to be a pirate, or little better—who came, with a young and lovely wife, to reside in the town of Port Royal. They became acquainted with Marie, and, struck by her beauty and apparent artlessness, showed a great many kindnesses to her. This gained the heart of her old aunt, who readily consented that Marie should accompany Captain Berwick and his wife, on a visit to his estate in Jamaica. They sailed, and upon their arrival, she was offered as a slave at a mart in Kingston.

Here she attracted the attention of our friend Colonel Ormond, who was on a visit to the West Indies. Her appearance, and the contradictory tale told by Berwick called his notice to her forcibly, and, after a few inquiries, he became her purchaser for a large sum.

And thus we find her, after living ten years with him, the acknowledged mistress of his household, and still a *slave*, and by him as well as herself believed to be a Quadroon.

During all this period, they had lived together as man and wife. She had by her beauty and goodness, so insensibly won her way to his heart that he loved her devotedly. Not indeed with that refined and sentimental love, which poets in their moon-struck fancies prate about, but with that warm and generous passion such as children of the tropics feel. Ormond did not indeed at first dream of making her his wife, but, as years flew by, and the graces of her mind and the

nobleness of her soul were brought into action, and as she became the mother of two darling children, he began to seriously reflect upon it, and ultimately determined to consummate the matter by giving her his name. He had delayed it thus far. When brought to the test, there was in his mind a shrinking reluctance, which he did not even confess to himself, of mingling his name and lineage with one in whose veins the burning tide of Africa flowed. Then there was a feeling of delicacy in bringing the affair before the public, and laying his household gods open to the vulgar gaze. But now he determined to surmount all this, and make the *amende honorable*.

Thus we find him, and it is but justice to say that such had long been his earnest intention:

It was after the lapse of a few minutes, that laughing, silvery voices were heard, and the patter of hasty little feet, and Marie appeared, followed by the children, who, as soon as they had entered the room, uttered the word "Papa," and rushed to greet with caresses one who was ever delighted to receive them, and whose face beamed with pleasure, as he noted their affectionate earnestness. He smiled and pressed them to his heart, as they climbed upon his knee, and he listened and smiled again, at their childish prattle. Marie stood near; a tear of delight was in her eye, as she gazed, with all a fond mother's pride, at the objects which engrossed so much of her affections.

Colonel Ormond passed his arms around them, and, thus encircled, he leaned back and gazed at the enchanting fairies. Zoe, the elder, was ten years of age; Estelle two years her junior. Zoe was of that rich, deep tint which is emblematical of a mixed blood; but her fine transparent skin showed the blue veins, through which

coursed an ardent tide. Her features were regular, and her dark eye the same as her mother's. She was of a reserved, yet proud disposition, and extremely sensitive. Estelle, whose style of beauty was similar, had a lighter complexion. Her eye was soft and beaming as a gazelle's, but resembled her father's. She was wild, credulous and enthusiastic, and more vivacious than Zoe.

The evening meal was announced, and the family partook of it. When old Sylvia, the nurse, entered and bore off the children to bed, Marie remained.

Colonel Ormond drew forth a chess-board, and, having lighted a fresh cigar, invited her to play. When they had been thus engaged a half hour, there was a pause in the game. Marie looked up. "Ormond," said she, "do you know what I have been thinking of to-day?"

"No," he replied, smiling, and making a move on the board. "But doubtless you have been studying out some new pattern for a cape, or have invented a new mode of dressing the hair."

"Something more serious than that."

"Well."

"Charles, you know that our children are now growing up without education; and I have thought that we should try and place them at school."

"That is what I have often considered."

"Well, I have thought of a plan."

"What is it?"

"To-day Monsieur Cirallé was here with Madame they are going to return to France to live."

"Indeed!"

"He wishes to return. And now for my proposition. Let us send the children to Paris. In the Con

vent of Mercy they will find a home, and in dear mother St. Clare a parent."

"Marie, this is sudden," said Ormond, thoughtfully. "It requires reflection. There are schools nearer ——"

"Charles, I know what you would say," she replied, interrupting him. "I have reflected on this. It is a terrible thing to send away such young children; but, Charles, you know the pain, the humiliation, to have a slight put upon them on account of their descent. Oh! I know, I can feel this. No! we will not place them where those prejudices exist."

"Your observations are just, Marie," he said; "but the sacrifice is great."

"Oh! Charles, you little know the sacrifices a loving mother can make, the pangs she can endure, and the agony she can suffer for those she loves. I can, and am willing to place them from under my care."

"Well, Marie, they *must* be placed somewhere; and yet I dislike to act. Procrastination is one of my greatest faults. I am too indolent, and some day it will be my ruin. What do you propose?"

"To send them with good Madame Cirallé; she will place them in the convent."

"Will you speak to her about it?"

"Yes: and I know she will be delighted. She has no children of her own, and in Paris she can so often visit them."

"It is a good idea, Marie, as all your ideas are," he replied, affectionately pressing her hand.

"Charles, it is a great trial; and yet it is for their good. The idea of separation from them is almost death; but they will be kindly treated, and habits of industry will be taught them. But oh!" she continued with vehemence, "if they go, and, Charles, you were

to be taken from me—ah! and even I, too, might die—their fate ——” She shuddered, and the pallor of death overspread her countenance. “Ah! they would have *no* friend. Their mother’s fate, despair! death!—the slave auction!—shame, and ruin! Ah! but there *is*, there must be a God, and He would not suffer that.”

The blood flushed over Ormond’s brow, as he tenderly drew her toward him; for she trembled convulsively with excitement, and this was a subject which always caused her extreme agitation. “Come, Marie,” he tenderly said, “compose yourself. There is no fear of that. You know that I have no near relations, and those I have are far away among the frozen mountains of New England. The children will have all I possess.”

“I know it, Charles; I know it; and I feel all a woman can feel—how deeply and how tenderly I love you.”

“I believe you, Marie, I believe you; and you know, Marie, how I prize you.”

“Oh! Charles, a man can never feel the strength of a woman’s love. Oh! you are dearer to me than others, or than you otherwise would be. Did you not buy me from slavery—ay, worse than slavery? Have you not rescued me from shame, and raised me up to your own condition? And has your voice ever sounded harshly in my ears? Never! Ah! Charles, I love you, I adore you.” And here she fell on his breast again, and wept violently.

“Come, Marie, come—do not let such scenes of horror trouble your mind. They are like the stormy wind passing through the strings of a harp; they produce notes of discord and sorrow. Come, my love, only summer winds, light and gentle, should pass

through *your* harp, and call forth sweet sounds, such as you delight me with. Come, you shall play for me. Come!" He arose, and led her gently to a piano; and as she struck the keys, he leaned over her, and drank in the rich and silvery sweetness of her voice. "You have improved much, Marie," he said, as she arose after she had finished, "and have well profited by Cirallé's lessons."

She smiled with a gratified air, and leaned her head on him as he led her back to her seat.

"And now that your mind is composed, let us sit and talk awhile."

"Well, Charles," she replied, "will you be angry if I say something to you?"

"Surely not, Marie; no subject is forbidden to you; but I see by your gravity that it is another one of my sins of omission."

"Charles, I can not reproach you; but you know, according to law, I am still in bondage."

"True, true, Marie; and there is another sin of ten years' standing; and I assure you that there has not been a single week during the past year that I have not intended to act in the matter. But," continued he, "you know the cause, Marie. It is a shrinking, a repugnance to make an exposé of our situation. Still it must be done."

"That is all, Charles, and I am sure you will neglect it no longer."

"Doubt it not, Marie; but what, let me ask, makes you think of such things to-night?"

"I scarce know why it is, but there has a most singular thing happened to me. The other day, as I was unpacking some bulbs which had been put up last season, my eye caught a line on the paper cover—I paused

and read it, it was a leaf of an old law-book—one sentence most particularly attracted my notice; but you are laughing at me.”

“No, no, proceed; you quite interest me.”

“Well, it ran thus—it was headed, ‘*Las siète Partidas. The children who are born of a free man and a slave are themselves slaves, as they follow the condition of the mother.*’ ”

“Well.”

“And it went on, and gave the law of descent, and stated that *illegitimate children* could not inherit property which was the father’s.”

“Well, that is all true—the leaf, which you accidentally came across, is a portion of our old Spanish law, but do not be uneasy, Marie—maybe the thing was intended by Providence to hasten me on to action in this matter.”

“Oh, Charles, I feel no fear so long as we both shall live, but our God only has the knowledge when we shall die. Consider if it were soon or suddenly, the situation of our children.”

“You represent your case in a strong light, Marie; but I hope no such event will happen soon.”

“God avert it; but we are in His hands.”

“Most true, Marie. If I were to reason with you, I might be persuaded within the pale of the Church.”

“Charles, do you know that I am a little inclined to be superstitious?”

“Can I doubt it, when you believe in signs?”

“Nay,” she added, playfully; “do not begin with ridicule.”

“Well, proceed.”

“Do you remember old Celeste, who died at the plantation last summer?”

“Yes, I do, and think before she died she used

about three gallons of my best brandy to keep her '*sperits*' up, as she said."

"Well, I had been very kind to her, and about an hour before she died, she called me close to her side. She had, you know, been a priestess or conjuror, or something of the kind in her own country. 'Missis,' she said, 'you has been mighty kind to the poor old creetur, and I must give you the warnin before I leave.' She gazed at me long and earnestly. At length she said, 'Child, I am going soon, but listen to the words of an old woman who loves you. Your eye is bright, and the plow of grief has not been over your brow yet; it is smooth—the current of your life flows calmly, but there are hidden quicksands below. Now turn your eyes to where the cold north wind comes from, then and there will come that cold wind to blight your soul and wither it up. Yet stay,' she quickly said, 'there may be a different fate—you may sleep upon a cold pillow before that—I see a cross line in your hand;' (she had taken my hand a moment before); 'your children may feel the blight; but it will come. I tell you to warn you, not for spite.' She died very soon after, having, at her request, been lifted up to see the sun set."

"Pshaw! nonsense," cried Ormond, laughing heartily; "why, old Celeste, your Pythoness, had been in her dotage for five years previous to her death."

"Oh, may be so," replied Marie, "but her words always had a great effect upon me. Did you never observe that, from the most common negro language, she would branch off, and her conversation even become eloquent and fervid?"

"Yes, that was for effect—she was naturally intelligent—but come, you are tired, and to-morrow we will go to the plantation."

CHAPTER III

"All, in a reverend row,
Their gray-haired grandsires, sitting in the sun
Before the gate, and leaning on their staff,
The well-remembered stories of their youth
Recount, and shake their aged locks with joy."

THE morning came, fair and balmy. The population of the portion of the city, in which Colonel Ormond resided, were not then, nor are they now, remarkable for early rising.

While the Americanized portion of the metropolis began to resound to the noise, confusion and bustle incident to a commercial port, this part was almost buried in silence.

It was about ten o'clock that Colonel Ormond, Marie, and the children, who, furnished with shawls, and, stowed among carpet-bags and band-boxes, accompanied by old Sylvia, the nurse, stepped into a carriage in waiting, and were rolled down to the good steamer "Baton Rouge," then lying at the levee, ready to leave for Bayou Sara and the coast—which trip then generally occupied two days and nights.

Among the passengers there were many different characters. There was the Northerner returning home, well posted up as to the "Slavery Question" in the South; the green country boy who had been to the city for the first time, and the old sugar planter, who was hobnobbing with the up-land cotton planter at the bar.

There were many of Colonel Ormond's acquaintances on board, and he formed many new ones.

By one of his friends, he was introduced to a Northern gentleman by the name of Hartley. With this person he was peculiarly struck from the first. He was a tall, handsome man, with a pleasing expression of countenance, and an upright bearing. He had been sent by one of the Northern banks on business, and his present destination, in furtherance of his object, was a small river town. He was much pleased with Colonel Ormond. It was his first visit to the South, and he exhibited much concern in the planting interest, inasmuch as, having been bred among people that hold that Slavery is a crime, he was surprised to find erroneous the views which he had imbibed regarding it. He was a thorough-bred and educated gentleman. Colonel Ormond was amused at the earnestness, with which he propounded the most absurd questions in regard to the negroes, and at the queries he put to overseers on the plantations where the boat stopped.

After some further conversation with him, Ormond at length gave him an invitation to visit him at his plantation. This was done partly because he learned that Hartley's object was the purchase of a large amount of stock in a city bank in which he was himself a stockholder.

The invitation was gratefully accepted.

It was a placid Sabbath evening as the steamer neared Colonel Ormond's landing, and, as her massive bell tolled out its deep sound, she slackened her headway, and approached the shore. What a sight was there to give the lie to the foul calumnies of the Northern agitator!

The family residence, built like many others on the

coast, was after the "olden French style." It was supported on brick pillars; and a large and spacious portico ran around it. Those old Frenchmen, how wise they were! They studied the sanitary rules of architecture instead of leaving their dwellings "*squat*" and flat on the ground, where no circulation of air could be had, and where they got the full benefit of all the unhealthy emanations of a soil, composed of the very elements of malaria. They elevated their houses high, had tight floors, wide galleries, and a free current of pure, dry air. The roof ran up very steep and was crowned by a cupola, surrounded with a heavy balustrade. The yard was ornamented with that pride of the south, the live-oak, which afforded a grateful shade during the summer heat.

Then there was to the rear and left a dense grove of orange, which ran along by the garden fence. The garden itself was tastefully laid out in plots, and boasted a fine collection of horticultural treasures. Outside of the yard, and beyond the garden, was the Quarter for the negroes. The houses ran in four equal rows, at angles from the river. In the midst was the overseer's house, which, like the rest, was brilliant with a new coat of whitewash; and the whole were buried in a little forest of China-trees. At one corner of the "quarter" yard was the *hospital*, where the sick daily received the attentions of a skillful physician, and were well nursed by an old negress who gloried in the title of "Grumbling Sally."

Near the overseer's house hung a massive bell, at the summons of which, the labors of the day were commenced and ended.

Beyond the Quarter were the negroes' gardens and chicken-houses. The stables and corn-houses could

be seen through the trees further back; while the tall chimneys of the sugar-house overlooked the whole.

It was indeed a scene of beauty and good order. The steamer landed our party; crowds of negroes of all ages, sexes and colors, came thronging to meet them; smiling and glad faces were all around, eager and clamorous to bid a welcome to a kind and indulgent master. Mr. Hartley accompanied the family to the house. He had seen enough in his brief intercourse with the South, to appreciate how gross was the misrepresentation, how foul and ungenerous the slanders, which had been dinned into his ears from his infancy. He had been taught to look upon the slaveholder as a kind of half-human monster, with no feeling, nor sentiment of refinement in his composition. And the life of the slave, a dull and continued round of suffering, an eternal groan of agony; with no ray of comfort, and no kind word to cheer thankless labor from year to year. He therefore had been taught hatred of the system as one of the cardinal virtues. But Mr. Hartley was a man of observation; he did not allow *cradle doctrine* to influence him in his opinions. He saw before him a sample of the South, a native picture, not flattered or got up for effect, he saw the slaves in their every-day life, a happy, contented, and careless race; well fed as their looks testified; well lodged and not over-tasked; and he at once mentally drew the comparison between the negroes and their happy condition, and the starved laborer of the North. He saw the slave well taken care of, and comprehended that it would be so, if not from philanthropy, at least for the sake of their available labor. He then turned his thoughts to the North. He called to mind the thousand families, who, pale and attenuated by

want and sickness, are shut up in their narrow, filthy dens; where vice and depravity stalk abroad, and the wretched inmates live and die, in a state lower than the brutes of the earth; where murder rears its bloody front, and incest, and crimes too horrible for even the police officers' gaze, are as frequent as the revolutions of our planet; and he cursed mentally the bigoted fanatics, who delight in creating feuds between people, who should be on terms of amity.

Colonel Ormond, late in the evening, invited Mr. Hartley to a stroll through the Quarter. They passed to the front and entered the yard. Groups of negroes were scattered around in different attitudes. There were seated, on a bench under the trees, some two or three older ones, whose patriarchal appearance and gray locks attracted immediate notice.

Around them was a group of younger ones, who eagerly listened to the conversation of their seniors.

There were another set stretched at full length on the green grass; happy, and unconscious of the deep degradation of their situation. There was a troop of noisy children, who stopped their gambols on the grass to crowd around the stranger and their master, who to please them spoke kindly to them. Bursts of laughter went forth from them when they replied to his questions. They seemed delighted at his notice; but exhibited none of that fright which would be shown by those, with whom kindness was not usual. They came around—a merry grinning troop; they examined Mr. Hartley's dress, and handled his watch chain without fear or hesitation. At the doors of some of the houses, were seen sitting the inmates quietly smoking their pipes, while ever and anon a snatch of a hymn would issue from the tenements of the pious.

All were free from care and happy in the possession of *enough*.

As Mr. Hartley turned and gazed over the scene, he thought he had never seen a more interesting spectacle. The deep respect paid to their master, as they returned to the house; the combined sounds at this lovely hour; the pale blue smoke from the chimneys, as the negroes prepared their evening meal—all formed a picturesque impression which he never forgot.

One character presented himself, who deserves mention. He was called old *Uncle Pierre*. He had been, when a child, brought from Congo. He was a middle-sized old man about fifty years of age, and evidently considered himself a privileged favorite. He had a great passion for putting on pompous airs; speaking to the other negroes with a tone of authority, and using big words, which he generally put in the wrong place. He came up, and, after making his best bow, informed his master how careful he had been during his absence, and lauded himself very highly. He was kept about the garden and yard, and attended to his master's house, a kind of "boy" of all work. But of Pierre anon. Colonel Ormond gave him a kind word, and they returned to the house and to the evening meal.

CHAPTER IV.

"Vincit Veritas."

FOR a few days nothing of interest transpired. Mr. Hartley remained a great portion of the time in the house. Marie he treated with the greatest courtesy. He talked with the children, and laughed heartily at the gambols of the little negroes. He rode with Colonel Ormond or played chess in the evening; or he would steal out alone on the river bank and muse on his northern home, as he gazed over the cold dull water. He listened to old Pierre's stories with attention, and then coolly informed him that he believed every word of them. In fact he had rendered himself a general favorite in a short time.

"Mr. Hartley," said Colonel Ormond to him one morning after breakfast; "come with me into the Quarter. I want you to see the way our negroes are treated with regard to comfort, food and sickness.

"Here," he continued as they stopped before the door of the hospital, "let us enter." It was a square building of two rooms, with a small gallery in front. One room was destined for the males, and the other for the opposite sex. Every thing was scrupulously neat and clean. In the male department there were three patients. They were on cots, a number of which were placed around the room. Colonel Ormond went up to each one. He inquired after their ailments, and, after making some gentle remark, turned and en-

tered the other room. Here were also several patients. The dispensary was in this room, and fully supplied with medicines.

Colonel Ormond now rang a small bell, and old "grumbling Sally" answered the summons. She was a thin, spare negress, with an erect figure and an intelligent countenance. "She is the nurse of the hospital," remarked he, "and can undertake the care of a common case, as well as some physicians. She understands all the simple medicines and their doses, and is always within hearing of the bell."

After making a few remarks to her, they left the building.

"That is a precious old coon," said Colonel Ormond, "and would amuse you by her originalities; she has no faith in the regular doctors, except my family physician, Dr. Grant, and imagines that the doctor and she have more real knowledge than all the faculty beside. She is never satisfied, however, and hence she is known by the name of 'grumbling Sally.'"

Scarcely had he said this, ere they heard her shrill voice in full blast at a number of little negroes, who were at some of their pranks. The gentlemen next entered several of the houses. These were furnished very plainly, but, cleanly. A bed in the corner, and perhaps two, clothes hanging on pegs around the room, a pine table and a few chairs made on the place, together with chests and a plentiful supply of cooking utensils, completed the list—and what would they want more?

"How do you feed them?" asked Mr. Hartley.

"On Sunday morning the overseer goes to the meat-house, and there assembles the negroes; four pounds of pork are weighed out to each one and they get a

peck of meal, a half gallon of molasses, beans, sweet potatoes and vegetables, which they raise themselves. They are allowed to raise chickens and always have a supply of eggs."

"What time do they go to work?"

"At daylight, and stop at sundown, rest two to three hours during the middle of the day, but have nearly every Saturday afternoon and evening to wash and mend, and cultivate their patches. On Sunday they either go to church or remain at home, as may please them. They always have a week after the grinding season is over."

"The negroes look clean; is it true they have only two pair of pantaloons a year?"

"Oh! that," laughed Colonel Ormond, "is another of the Abolition sayings. I give my negroes three and sometimes four suits a year from head to foot, but generally they give only two suits a year."

"Have they no amusements?"

"Often they have a dance of a moonlight night; for there are several fiddlers, and then we give them a big dinner occasionally; but, my dear sir—you must not imagine that I personally attend to all this; my overseer takes charge of these things; I give general orders, and that is enough."

"You do not punish often?"

"Seldom; my overseer is a good manager, and when he does punish it is done effectually; but it is seldom a negro is struck."

"They are a happy set," remarked Mr. Hartley, "and I am undeceived."

"Ah! if all our Northern brethren could come and witness the truth, a great change would take place in their judgments."

"I am gratified beyond measure," he replied. "I had been led to believe that the life of the slave was horrible; that the chain of slavery galled their bodies; that the lash of the overseer was never idle; that not one ray of hope broke through the dark horizon of their life. But I find that I, with thousands, have been deluded, and that the imaginary chain sits as lightly as a golden one on the bosom of beauty. And I now say unhesitatingly, that the life of the negro at the South is many times better than that of the lower working classes at the North."

"I have no means of judging."

"Ah! colonel, but I have. I have seen the oppression of the rich over the poor, the grinding exaction, the unfeeling disregard of any thing but money."

"Well, they will learn wisdom probably."

Just then they were passing by the hospital, and heard the tones of "old Sally;" they were hid behind the projection of the porch. She was rattling away at a terrible rate at the abuses, which, in her opinion, required correcting. They listened to her a moment and then walked on, thus breaking off the conversation regarding slavery, which pleased Colonel Ormond, for he really disliked discussions on the subject.

They stopped at the stable. Old Pierre was there superintending the operation of drenching a horse.

"Now, you ignorant nigger," he said; "you commences dis way; you ties his head up at a angle of forty-five degrees, and den he takes it like a lamb. Poor fellow; now dat's his way. Dar, it's gone down in his *diafram* now. Come, Jim, git up and ride him around. Dat's one of massa's best horses." Here he turned and, suddenly seeing the gentlemen, he be-

came very active; but, in showing his activity, he displayed his situation—he was tolerably drunk.

“Well, Pierre,” said the colonel, “you have made a mistake, I see. You, instead of the horse, have taken the whisky.”

“Well, master,” replied he, grinning, “I almost begin to be feered I is. But dat was a mistake on my part, sah.”

“Yes, so I see,” replied the colonel; “that is your besetting sin, Pierre. Go to your cabin.”

“Massa, if you stop one minute, I tell you how it was. You see, I had de drench in one hand, and some water in de other, an —”

They turned away, leaving Pierre to finish at his leisure.

It was night; but Ormond and Mr. Hartley sat in the gallery, enjoying their cigars. Mr. Hartley had that evening been taking a general round of the plantation.

“Well, colonel,” he said, “I have been this evening to the back of the plantation, and had a long walk; and I have been favored with the company of Pierre on my return.”

“Pierre considers himself a privileged character—a sort of patriarch of the Quarter; he talks more and does less than any one on the place.”

“He causes me to laugh often at his big words, which he generally misuses ridiculously.”

“He stretches the long bow, you observe?”

“Yes; his exploits are many and wonderful.”

“But there is a peculiarity about him, which you may not have discovered.”

“What is that?”

“His love of whisky.”

"Indeed?"

"Yes; but it is the failing of the race, and more particularly of his tribe."

"What is it?"

"Pierre is a *Zambo*, the most miserable and degraded race we have; selfish, cunning and thieving. It is almost impossible to attach them to you by kindness, so as to be secure from their treachery. But he is better than his race generally, and Pierre is not devoid of some points of good sense. He is exceedingly shrewd, and one would not discover it at first. I have seen his countenance change in a moment from a look of intelligence to one of almost apparent idiocy; but it is only when he has some end of his own to serve."

"Well, Pierre has been giving me a description of a lake near here, where he says one may have some sport, fishing."

"That much is true, Mr. Hartley; and if you say so, I will have some provisions put up; and, if you will go down the bayou to the lake, I will ride over, get two friends, and join you at—say twelve o'clock."

"Could you not accompany me?"

"I have an engagement until ten; but you may confidently look for us. I will make a servant put up something, and you can take Pierre and Florat,—one for fish, and the other for game. Take a gun along, and my word for it, your visit will be repaid."

"I should like much indeed to go; but who is this Florat?"

"He is a yellow Creole boy, about thirteen years old. He knows every turn in the swamp, every crook in the bayou, and every hole in the lake. He knows all the fish by sight, and the alligators by name; can shoot better, and scream louder, and is the greatest

little devil that you ever saw. However, you will find out all about him, and be regularly introduced by Pierre."

"I then avail myself of your kindness, colonel."

"I will bring with me a particular friend, Doctor Grant, and another—a real hot-blooded Southerner—Mr. Herndon, a Creole—a true specimen of an intelligent, high-minded and pure Louisianian. He has but one fault, and that is his antipathy to abolitionists. He will reason with you for hours on slavery, which *I* think is the most tedious thing in the world."

"I shall be delighted to meet your friends; but, about the arguments in regard to slavery, Mr. Herndon will have a one-sided affair, as I am now convinced of Northern ignorance in the premises."

"We have the glory of one more proselyte, then," said the colonel, laughing. "Well, I am glad to hear it, and Hernden will meet you as a brother. He is one of the most fiery fellows you ever saw; but there breathes no nobler spirit than his. At the same time he is courteous in his reasoning. But this is one of his favorite topics, and he always broaches it to a Northerner. He is only the type of a class in the South."

CHAPTER V.

"Here in its gay network and fantastic twine,
The purple cogul threads from pine to pine;
And oft as the fresh airs of morning breathe,
Dips its long tendrils in the stream beneath;
And, 'mid the cedar's darksome boughs, illumes,
With instant touch, the lori's scarlet plumes."

MORNING came, and with it the singing birds, and pleasant breeze, rustling among the green leaves of the live oaks and orange boughs, making a gentle, mysterious whispering; as if the spirits of the forest were holding a soft and low-toned colloquy. Then, too, was heard the sound of the cowboy as he cracked his whip, and began a rude melody, while the cattle-bell kept up a sort of time. There was the glad neigh of the horses, and the happy voices of the negroes, as they went, refreshed after a night's rest, to their work through the waving cane.

In the orange-trees, now heavy with their golden burden, sat one mocking-bird; while, perched on a shrub in the garden, was another, both making the air melodious with their rich pipings. The atmosphere was laden with sweetness from the rare exotics which found a place in the garden.

All these combined, make a happy association of sights and sounds; and where can a man find them with more facility than in a well-ordered Southern plantation?

And then, when the rolling season commences, there is the sound of the cart-driver's whip, the shout of the boys, the rattle of the cane wagons, the hurried rush to the sugar-house, as they tumble their load of cane out, and give place for others, at the foot of the cane carrier.

The rushing of fires at different furnaces—the hiss of steam as the engineer touches a guage-cock—the merry laugh and jest of the cane carrier feeders as they throw on the saccharine load—the distant sound of the cutter's song, and the hoarse roar of the engine—the huge wreath of steam from the kettles, with the smell of cooked sugar. Then to go in; to the right the engine labors, it heaves and pants like some monster in pain, as its governor-balls fly round, and the immense wheels revolve. The sugar-mill is at work. See those ponderous cylinders of iron; observe as they turn how they crush and break the cane-stalk; and see the juice in a liquid stream of syrup, as it runs below to the pan, to be caught in the juice boxes, while the worthless mass, now deprived of all its sweetness, is thrown upon the bagasse shoat, and carried away to enter into the constituents of a new crop. Then see the operation. A trap is raised, a rush of juice, thick, discolored and filthy—the *grand* is filled—it is there limed and clarified, and passes thence to the other kettles. In the kettles it boils and writhes and foams; it is skimmed; thrown back and inspissated by the action of heat, until it is time to make a *strike*. At each kettle stands a negro man; his business is to skim and dip, and to pass the liquid from one kettle to another.

Now they are going to run the syrup from the battery. How rich and odorous! There it is in a

cooler, where it will remain to granulate. Amid all this creaking machinery and boiling, these seething masses of syrup, and clouds of steam, stands the planter—the type of the true *gentleman*. He is there the “monarch of all he surveys;” dressed in Attakapas cottonade, a Panama hat on his head, a cigar in his mouth, and an eye to all around him. He looks into the kettles; then his gaze is turned to the engine. Again he tries the density of the syrup with the syrup-gauge or saccharometer, and quickly his eyes are scanning the operation of *potting* sugar in the purgery.

We might here draw a comparison between the southern manufactory, where the labor is all our own, and the manufactory of the North. Friend of New England, turn your philanthropic eyes a moment here. Do you see that big, fat, greasy negro at this kettle, with a broad grin on his countenance? See his independence, view his air. Do you see the sign-manual of despair on his brow? Are there *starvation* and *care* and *want* in that countenance? There is another—that one feeding the rolls, see with what an air he chews his tobacco, and squirts it independently around; then stopping, throwing his hands around him to warm them by the quick motion, ends with a “Whoh!” Are care and ill treatment marked on that physiognomy? And see those five or six who have just had their breakfast, good bread, meat, and coffee. Hear their careless, happy “Hah! ha! ha!” Is *this* the sound of woe and mourning? Where are the whip and chains and branding iron?

For shame—Pah, that any set of people as “smart” as the Yankees acknowledge themselves to be, should be so miserably gulled, so humbugged with the raw-head and bloody-bone stories, which their abolition

leaders, their pamphlets and public journals teach. But it is no joke which the Northern manufactory presents. There you have the sunken eye, the haggard cheek, the gloomy brow, for they are freemen! God save the mark! freemen! A sickly wife, a few wretched, squalid, starving children, and miserable wages to barely keep body and sou together. Are there not some of them who would exchange situations with our happy negro? well fed, well clothed; lightly worked; in ill health or good, plenty is before him; kind attention during illness, and no pang of agony, as he surveys his children, for they are taken care of.

Far-seeing Yankee, before you utterly condemn us, come to the

“Land of the cedar and vine;
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine.”

Judge us calmly and fairly, and acknowledge that you have had an erroneous idea of slavery.

It was again a balmy morning when Mr. Hartley was aroused by old Pierre; and, hastily swallowing a cup of coffee, he shouldered his gun, and, finding Florat below with a basket of provisions, set forth on his errand of destruction. Florat was a lively fellow, active as a monkey, and full of mischief. At about one fourth of a mile from the sugar-house was the beginning of the bayou, which terminated in the lake. This bayou supplied the water, which was used in the boilers, and about the building generally. At its commencement it was wide, clear and deep. A skiff had been placed in the bayou for fishing in the lake. It had now been pushed up to the bank. Florat leaped in, and arranged old Pierre's jacket in the stern for Mr. Hartley, who entered. Pierre then shoved off,

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and, adjusting the seats, selected a pair of oars and began to pull. Hartley remarked that he seemed to scan the provisions closely.

"What are you looking after, Pierre?" he asked.

"Why you see, sah," answered he, looking very grave; "wheneber I comes dis way I likes to fetch long a drop of sperits; it keeps off de fluvia of de swamp; and a fellow he is a heap more lucky when he is got it long wid him."

Hartley burst out into a loud laugh at the philosophy of Pierre.

"How do you account for that, Pierre?"

"Donno, sah, only you see dis fishing is a raal scientific tech; you has to give your hand a kind of tremblin' motion, jest to make de fish tink de ting is live; for you see de fish heap rather hab de fun of killin' his victuals than to find it dead. He is just like folks bout dat, for you see, sah, dars a natural instinct in a man what makes him love to kill."

"Well, you are about half right, Pierre, and I suppose you have not had your morning dram yet."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he. "Well, Massa Hartley, you is de best guesser I is ever seed. I ain't dat, jist give me a dram or two and I'll make dis old skiff go same like a steamboat. Lord, sah, when I has got some old rye in me, I is a horse! Tank you very kindly, sah," he continued, smacking his lips with peculiar *gout*, as he allowed the liquor to slowly trickle down his throat. "I wish I could have dat feeling foreber. Lord, sah, de preacher says dat dis whisky was 'vented by de devil; but its my 'pinion dat it is de pure juice of Pardice."

Florat grinned with delight as he listened to Pierre. They proceeded down the bayou, under the sturdy

strokes of the oar, enlivened and spiced by the odd sayings of Pierre, and the screams of Florat, as he struck at some unlucky young alligator, which, swimming along, showed itself near the boat, or, as he stabbed in the water desperately at a *gasper gow*, as it lay listlessly before the bow.

The banks of the bayou were of soft mold, and were clothed to the bluff edge with weeds, bright wild flowers and mutton cane. Every thing was quiet, save the trill of the mocking-bird, the wild carol of the blackbird, or the melodious warble of the gold-finch, as he poised himself on the topmost twig of a tree near by. Then there was the hum of the bee, the whirl of the musqueto-hawk, and mayhap the leap of the fish in the sluggish stream ahead; or the scream of a crane as it flew off and threw out its ungainly neck and legs; or the dash of a dozen turtles, as they splashed from a rotten log into the water.

"Dat is a very curous insect, sah," exclaimed Pierre, pausing a moment in his labor, and wiping the perspiration from his brow, on which it stood in great beads.

"What, Pierre?"

"Why, dem cooters, dey is fulfillin the Scripture, sah."

"How is that?"

"Why, sah, dey is always watching; and dey is as hard to catch napping as a hard-shell Baptist."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Florat.

"De cooter is de boatman,
De jay bird de lawyer,
De mocking-bird de preacher,
De alligator sawyer,
Ha, ha, hah! whoop pe!"

"Wh—wh—what you for making all dat fuss for, you black rascal," exclaimed Pierre; turning and making a back-handed lick at him, while he dodged the blow and sprang back laughing.

Swiftly they glided on. Suddenly Pierre ceased pulling, and laying down his oars, clapped his hand on his stomach, commenced making a good many ugly faces, which he designed as expressive of pain.

"What is the matter, Pierre?" asked Hartley.

"Oh! Massa Hartley," groaned he; "I is in a 'siderable deal of pain in de region of de abominable."

"In the what?" asked he, laughing in spite of himself.

"In de abominable, sah," groaned Pierre; pressing harder on the pit of his stomach. "Oh! ah! ugh!"

"Well, what must I do for you, Pierre?" asked Hartley. "What must I give you?"

"Well, sah, I don't know. I don't think dat nothin' never does me any good but a little sperits. Oh! ugh! ah!"

Hartley saw through the ruse in a moment.

"Oh, I see what is the matter with you—a touch of cholera. Here, Pierre, take a dram."

Pierre seized the flask eagerly, put it to his mouth, and took a long pull—then drawing a deep breath, returned it, saying: "Ah! dat liquor has got a great head, sure. I feels considerable better now, sah."

"Very well, Pierre," laughed Hartley; "you are now to remember that you are not to have a pain in your 'abominable' again until this evening. Then you may have it very slightly. Do you hear, sir?"

"Yes, sah," grinned Pierre.

They had now reached the wider part of the bayou, immediately before its connection with the lake; and

a singular sight to the eyes of a Northerner presented itself. A sheet of water of some three miles in extent, surrounded on three sides with a virgin forest of tall cypress and gum was spread out before him. There were several small islands in it. The whole forest was clothed in a garb of melancholy gray moss, which hung from the topmost boughs in heavy waving masses, hoary and ancient, nearly to the water. Every thing around seemed locked in a trance. Vast trees with no undergrowth, like pillars in some immense cathedral, with this solemn drapery around them, unbroken by any opening, bounded the prospect. Far off stood hundreds of large white cranes, motionless, and gazing silently in the water—while the solitary heron fished around the edge, ever and anon uttering his peculiar and dismal cry. Upon many logs which were floating in the water, lay sleeping alligators, whom the warmth of the day had awakened from their torpor, to feel the warm sun; and thousands of turtle of all sizes dotted other logs and islets; and often would be seen the flounce of some fish as it tried to escape the jaws of the ravenous alligator-gar. The southern side of the lake was shallow, and filled with brush, swamp-reeds, and decayed logs. Here the congo and the venomous moccasin held dominion, and batted with the toad, and immense water-spiders, in the mass of decaying and offensive mud, and ooze and leaves and slime.

The opposite side of the lake was a bluff bank, dry and pleasant; the water deep, cool and clear, and a grateful shade was afforded. Here the boat was directed, and they then proceeded to dispose of the hamper of provisions which Colonel Ormond had caused

to be brought. It was lugged out, and placed at the root of a noble hackberry-tree.

When this was done, Pierre began his preparations for a morning's sport. He collected bait with a hand net, and uncoiled his lines.

"Now, Massa Hartley, suppose you try your hand at a fish, here be de lines, and I 'spect dat de fish bite mighty well dis mornin'. Now, you Flor, you look alive, and scoop up some bait."

Florat, acting upon this hint, stepped out upon a log; and after *scooping*, as Pierre called it, returned presently with a handful of minnows. These were were quickly impaled on the hooks.

"Now, Massa Hartley, does you take de lead here, sah. You perceive dat hook has got de insect on it—dat's mighty good bait for a hongry trout. I drops him in so, and gin him a switch;" and suiting the action to the word, he drew his line gently over the water, so as to disturb it slightly. He then let the cork float out slowly. The result was in a moment he had a large white trout hung; and, after a minute's delay, he laid it gasping on the bank.

Hartley admired the dexterity of the old fisherman, who evidently enjoyed his triumph. Florat tried his luck, and with the like success. Hartley then seized the pole, which Pierre handed him, and commenced. At first it appeared as if his line was avoided—but at length he saw a large perch make a dash—he met it, made his sweep, and up came the fish.

Thus varied the sport; many trout and perch were pulled up by each, until a goodly lot lay on the bank, and they even began to tire of the amusement. Hartley was entertained by the oddities of Pierre, and the remarks of Florat.

So passed the morning; when Hartley thought it was nearly time for Colonel Ormond to arrive. He therefore laid himself down on the bank, in the shade.

"Pierre," he exclaimed, "I would like to hear a good fish story."

Pierre remained silent a moment; then, looking up, replied, "I 'spect it is almost time to repeat dat drink, sah. You know de Bible says you can't do a good thing too often."

"Well," laughed he, "Pierre, I will give you a drink if you will tell me a good story about fishing."

"Well, sah, dat's a bargain. I knows one dat's almost as good as poor old Jonah an' dat big whale."

Hartley gave him the flask, and, after a long draught and a deep sigh, he began :

"You see, sah, dat dis massa ain't de fust one I eber had. I 'longed to ole massa, dis one's father. Wall, he used to have a heap ob company, and he thought a mighty much ob me. One day, says he, 'Pierre, go down to de lake, and get a big mess of fish. Some gentlemen is gwine to dine wid me to-day.' I sets off. You see dat bay-tree dar, wid de branch broke off near de top? Well: I come down, and I sets right down dar, and goes to work. De way I pulled up de fish were a considerable caution. I got toleble tired arter a while, and so, to rejoice my innards, I took a pull at a little bottle I carried long wid me; and den I sets to stringing my fish. When I finish dat, I puts 'em in de water to kinder freshen dem, and lights my pipe to have a smoke. I had not set dar for more than five minutes, looking in the water and a meditat' on dis world, when I seed a whirl, and a great, big, long, sneaking alligator gar, come a stealing on toward de bank. He was a sailing 'long

like a dog going to steal in a meat-house. I thought I would watch and say nothin' to him. Well, sah: he kept coming closer and closer; and den he all of a sudden made a grab, and he nailed my whole string of fish. Off he went like de debil was after him. Well, now, dar was a mad nigger about in dem times. I naterally danced like a congo. I hollered arter him just to leff half of em to come back; but he didnt pay no more 'tention to me than if I was a blind puppy.

"So I took another drink and cussed, and had to go to work and catch another mess of fish. When I got home, dinner was ober, and massa said I was a drunken rascal; but he didnt whip me. Old massa was mighty good dat way, he was. Oh! lor, I used to fool him mighty bad sometimes. Well, sah: I just swore I was gwine to match dat gar; so I got de blacksmith to make me a big hook. I den got two plow-lines, and next day come down here. I tied one end to de boat, and baited de oder with a piece of one of ole massa's little pigs. I pushed out, and lay down to watch. Every now and den I look over de side. Presently I see dat same great big gar come stealing long. I knowed him by de big green eyes. He was a smellin' round, and sidlin' up to de bait, like a highland nigger to a coast gal. After a while he made a grab and seized it. Den he know sure enough dat it was good to eat. It was soon in his belly; and den it was dat he found out dar was something inside of 'it; for he tried to cough, but de hook got fixed in his chitlins, and he give a jerk. Dat gin him de cholic, and he got wrathful. He opened his mouth and tried hard to get it up. He snorted, and den off he put. Lord, sah! you is

hearn tell of yearthquakes: he made dat old boat howl through de water as if de debil was chained to her, and he went by steam. De 'Diana' wa'n't no whar to her. Round and round de lake we went, like a streak of greasy lightnin'. We went faster and faster. Sometimes he would jump plum out ob de water, and den he would jerk away one side, and de water would bile and foam round us like soapsuds. At last he seemed tarmined to get rid of me any how, and he took a big sweep round de lake: he made my head swim. He went round it a *hundred and ten times*; I counted it. Round and round he went, wid his fins stickin' straight behind, and his head tucked down. Dis de way."

Here Pierre commenced a series of evolutions, and turned with great velocity to give a practical illustration of his story. Poor fellow! he went around once too often, and his feet catching in a root, he went, doubled up, over the bank, in about ten feet of water, head foremost.

Hartley dropped down on the ground, in an agony of laughter. Florat hugged a sapling to steady himself, and gave full vent to a series of unearthly noises, intended for laughter; and, failing to relieve himself in this manner, he let go all hold, and turned several summersets, to the great delight of himself.

Old Pierre managed to get hold of some roots, and scrambled out. The old fellow was considerably cut down; but Hartley, still laughing, prescribed a dose of brandy, which soon set him in a good humor again.

After some time, he said, "Well, Pierre, and then what happened?"

He studied a moment, and, with a quiet grin, ro-

plied, "Well, sah : dat gar ran around de lake so often dat his head 'gan to swim ; and at last he got so mad, and so blind, dat he just jumped ashore, and busted his head right open agin a cypress-tree."

"That is a very remarkable tale, Pierre."

"Dat de fact, sah ; and it's true, too, for I seed it my own self ; and, what's more, I has got dat same old hook, what I cut out of him, now at home in my cabin."

"Ha ! ha ! ha !" laughed Florat.

"Look here, now !" exclaimed he, turning to Florat in a rage ; "Don't you go, you yaller nigger, to be makin' fun out ob *me*. I'll bust you open, sure !"

"Well, Pierre, you and Florat get to dressing some of those fish ; and, by the time Colonel Ormond comes, we will have dinner ready."

"Well, if there is any thing I does know any thing 'bout, it is fixing up fish. Dere's Doctor Grant : he give you a kick wid one foot, and throw you a half a dollar at de same time. He make de greatest fuss 'bout fish, and Florat always bring curry out for him. I can beat him a-cookin a long way. Some of dese white folks, dey tink dey is mighty smart."

"Doubtless, Pierre."

"Yes, sirree ! and dey don't 'preciate a nigger, no how. Now, you does. Oh ! Massa 'Hartley, if you was my massa now."

"God forbid ! Pierre," laughed Hartley.

"Dey don't treat old niggers now as dey used to do."

"Ah ! how is that, Pierre ? don't you get enough to eat ?"

"Plenty, sah."

"Are you overworked ?"

"No sah, I doesent do no work, 'cept 'bout de garden and yard."

"What then have you to complain of?"

"Why sah! I ain't complainin', I is satisfied very well." He paused a moment, and looking at Hartley in an arch manner, asked—

"Ain't de niggers free in de country you comes from, sah?"

"Yes, Pierre, they are free."

"And mighty happy and rich dey is, sah, ain't dey?"

"Happy! no, the poorest, most miserable, dirty, sickly devils in the world, starving and dying by the hundreds, and hated and despised by the whites."

"Dat ain't what some of de white folks tells me, sah!"

"What white folks, Pierre?"

"Why, dem men what comes down in de flat-boats, and sells whisky to de niggers. I has had a heap of dem to beg me to run away; but I is too old."

"You would only regret it once, Pierre, and that would be always."

"May be so, sah! I has had my suspicions dat dey was fooling us, and was only mad case dey dident have no niggers deyself."

"Perhaps so, and you ought to be satisfied."

"I is, sah! only I don't like de way some folks does; my massa is a good man, he won't let de overseer hit one ob us; but he seem to tink sometimes, dat old niggers never wares out."

"Why, Pierre! it appears to me that you are treated as well as you deserve."

"Dat may be so, sah, but my massa ain't like my ole massa was; we ain't got no regular misses. Now

Miss Marie she is mighty good, but it ain't like a sure enough one."

"Well, Pierre," exclaimed Hartley, "I have an opinion of my own, that you are an ungrateful scoundrel." He saw through the manner of Pierre in a moment; negro-like he only wanted to be encouraged, to villify and calumniate one of the best of masters; so he bade him go to work and shut his mouth.

This he obeyed, and assisted Florat to make a fire, and prepare a meal for the expected arrivals.

CHAPTER VI.

"In friendly discourse whiled the time away :
And slaves, obedient to the call, did spread
Upon the velvet grass the banquet rare."

"Come to the woods in whose mossy dells
A light all made for the poet dwells ;
Come, while in freshness and dew it lies,
To the world that is under the free blue sky."

HEMANS.

HARTLEY, after casting his eye on the scaly operations going on, shouldered the gun which had been brought along, and sauntered off into the woods. As he advanced, the forest grew thicker and darker. Vast trees, a century or two old, all bearded with the solemn gray moss, extended as far as he could see; while every few rods he was compelled to make a circuitous rout to avoid small lakes and boggy places.

After wandering more than an hour in these dim old woods, and listening to the rustling of the ancient cypress without seeing any game worthy of a shot, he started to return.

Suddenly he paused, he heard a voice—he listened, it was only old Pierre. He retraced his steps hastily, for just then he remembered that he had left the provisions unguarded, and that there were several bottles of wine, and one of brandy in the basket. He hastened his footsteps, and upon arriving in sight of the lake,

saw Florat in the boat fishing, and distinctly heard Pierre singing, apparently very happy. The origin of his merriment was suggested. An opening in the woods gave him a view; he paused; here was old Pierre with a bottle in one hand, in the act of making an extempore speech, in which: "rally round the standard," "interests of de country," "traitors," etc. etc., were distinguishable. With the other hand, he was gesticulating furiously, and had even worked himself into tears. Hartley proceeded on, and deep and low were his objurgations of Pierre. He came again in sight of him just in time to witness the closing scene. Pierre had changed it into a private camp-meeting, and the burden of an old negro song rang through the forest. The words which reached his ears, were—

"De big bell tolled,
De angel moaned,
I invite de strangers home,
I'd rather pray my life away
Than lay in torment half a day."

"Hic, hic, hic!" and then the old negro reeled up, utterly intoxicated.

When Hartley came up, his abuse was in no measured terms. Florat excused himself saying that Pierre had told him that if he would go out and fish, he would attend to cooking; but he did not know that he was so cunning. He had been delighted with the performance, though.

With his assistance, Hartley dragged Pierre under a tree to sleep off his drunkenness, and set Florat to work at the culinary department.

Just then a halloo was heard, and in a short time Colonel Ormond, accompanied by two gentlemen, rode

up. They were presented to Mr. Hartley, who was visibly embarrassed at the situation in which they had encountered him and the now oblivious Pierre, but the kind and courteous demeanor of the strangers, soon set him at his ease. Upon a felicitous description of Pierre's mishap, the company were thrown into convulsions of laughter, and many jokes were cracked at the old fellow's expense.

Mr. Hartley had leisure to examine his new acquaintances. Mr. Herndon was a native of Louisiana, his parents having emigrated from Carolina many years before. He was planting near Colonel Ormond, and was a bosom friend. He was a tall, handsome man, with a large blue eye, energetic and fiery, hot and impetuous when aroused, but no girl of sixteen could be more mild and gentle at other times. He was a sincere and ardent friend; a bitter and implacable enemy. He was pleasant and bland, and impressed Hartley favorably. He was dressed in light pantaloons, with a tight-bodied blue coat, and, in his *tout ensemble*, was noble and captivating.

Dr. Grant, on the other hand, was a smaller man, thin and wiry, with bold but aquiline features, with his perceptive faculties largely developed, and an eye dark and piercing. He was a merry, whole-hearted Virginian, who after receiving his diploma at the University, from the hands of its founder, established himself in the sunny South. Here he married, and ties of long association, and mutual esteem, bound him and Colonel Ormond to each other.

"Come, gentlemen, let's liquor," was the given and accepted invitation.

"Florat, be lively now," said the colonel, "and let us see how quickly you can have some dinner ready."

"I will take the lead in the cooking," said Dr. Grant. "You know, Herndon, that the ladies say I am the most accomplished *cuisinier* in the whole parish."

"Yes, doctor," he replied, "if you had graduated at Tortoni's in Paris, instead of in your medical school, you would have been invaluable."

All laughed, and good-humoredly assisted each other in preparing the meal, enlivening the labor with well-seasoned repartee and wit.

At length the fish were frying, and a cloth from the boat spread on the leaves, garnished with plates brought for the purpose, and all the little adjuncts which are never neglected by those who are accustomed to reunions of this kind.

"Come, Florat, now for the *curry*," exclaimed Dr. Grant. "Not enough coriander, too much turmeric, cayenne right. Ormond, you should get me to make your curry powders; I had an old uncle who lived in India, he taught me, he made me the *gourmand* I am; and left me nothing to support my taste. There now, Florat, serve up some more."

We will not weary the reader with the dinner in the woods; but only hope he may with old wine and good cheer, spirited conversation, and a fine cigar, enjoy such things as heartily as we have often enjoyed them.

"Well, Mr. Hartley," said Herndon as he leaned back against a tree, puffed his cigar, and settled himself comfortably. "I hope you enjoy Southern life."

"Thus far," replied Mr. Hartley smiling "I am more than satisfied, I am delighted."

"Colonel Ormond informs me, that you are from the land of steady habits, sir."

"I suppose, Mr. Herndon, I shall have to confess to that count—I am a Yankee."

"No disgrace, Mr. Hartley," he laughed, "I had rather be a Yankee, any time, than a Scotchman. We welcome our Northern brethren, warmly sir, when they come unprejudiced, to share our hospitality, but—"

"Herndon," quickly cried Colonel Ormond, giving him at the same time a meaning look.

"Bah!" laughed Mr. Herndon.

"Votre promesse—"

"Si je puis." Then turning to Hartley he continued. "Do you know, Mr. Hartley, that I am under a promise to Colonel Ormond, to abstain from introducing the subject of slavery to day?"

"Well," answered he, "I certainly appreciate the Colonel's delicacy, but as far as I am concerned it will not be disagreeable."

"There now," said Herndon, turning to Colonel Ormond, "I see that Mr. Hartley is a half Southerner already."

"I have been only a short time in the South, but I can say that I have been pleasantly surprised, at the difference of treatment to slaves, from what I had been accustomed to believe."

"Yes, they are treated much better than they deserve; they are a degraded race, and, are not susceptible of the feelings of human beings; they are pretty things to make freemen of, any how. Now, Mr. Hartley," he continued, turning and pointing to Pierre. "There is an old scamp whom you know is well-treated, fed and indulged, beyond his desert. He has as kind a master as ever lived. Well, take that negro as an example. Talk with him about his master, listen to him, and, if you are credulous, you will believe that

that master should have been in the Penitentiary ten years since."

Mr. Hartley felt how true this was, for he had that day had it brought home to him. "I have always heard that the negro was grateful for kindness, and took an interest in his owner's success."

"There are honorable exceptions to the rule I have laid down, Mr. Hartley, but they are very few. But in general the negro is so coarse in his feelings, that he is totally incapable of having a real affection for his owners; he may have a preference, but it is all habit. Whip a dog, and he will love you, is an old vulgar saying, which will apply to a negro; for it is a well-established fact that the more sternly and harshly they are treated, the more they will bear the semblance of esteem."

"Do you not think that the state of slavery is the cause of this gross feeling in the negro?"

"Most certainly not; they will not bear liberty, for as soon as the restraints which the whites impose on them are withdrawn, they soon return to a state of barbarism. This is proven in every country where the law of emancipation has passed. They are not fit for it—and even the colony now being established in Liberia is governed by white men, and its affairs conducted by the whites or mulattoes. Take away the Circassian, leave the pure negro alone, and in a few years there would not be discovered the faintest ray of civilization.

"Look at the British possessions in the West Indies—a few years since, the act of emancipation passed the British Parliament. What is the result? Freedom to the negro! it is a bitter boon. I have traveled in Jamaica and St. Domingo, since the negroes were freed. What a change! What a scene of deso-

lation met my eyes! Magnificent mansions, which once echoed to the sound of happy voices, are silent as the grave. Large fields once teeming with heavy crops of cane, yielding to the inroads of a rank and unwholesome vegetation, grown up in bushes, and the dwelling-place of the viper and the scorpion.

“Costly sugar-houses, with expensive fixtures, going to decay, doors off their hinges, the grass growing, rank and luxuriant, around their once bustling courts. Machinery imported at immense cost, eaten up with rust. All silent and untenanted. The hearth-stone cold, desolation and decay every where. God keep my beloved country from witnessing such a catastrophe! And where, sir, are those once happy families? Where? Scattered to the four winds of Heaven, penniless and destitute. And the slaves, too, is their condition bettered? Poor, degraded, pilfering wretches, dragging out a miserable existence. Every inducement offered to them to improve their condition—work and plenty—good wages and rewards. But, if you would find them, go to the crowded hospitals, the grog-shops, and other scenes of debauchery, there the free negro flourishes in all his glory. And these are the fruits of emancipation—ruining families, debasing servants, and converting fertile fields into a wilderness of bramble and thistle. These are the effects of this mistaken system—cursed be the head which ever conceived them! And even now, in the face of all this, the government of France is pursuing the same ruinous system. Now, if our friends at the North, who have an idea that all the negro wants is freedom to put himself on a level, in all respects, with the white race, wish to try it, there is a field open for their experiment.”

"You draw a very painful picture of the effects of emancipation, Mr. Herndon," said Mr. Hartley; "and although I am not as ultra as you are, still, I must confess, that there is much truth in your statement."

"I like you, Mr. Hartley, because you are not as rabid as some I wot off, and are willing to listen, and do not bring up the infernal cant of religion to sustain you. I would so much not blame the foreigner for abusing our system, but when the abuse comes from our brethren, only separated by a few hundred miles, and they declare an open and undying war against us, for the very system by which they live, and grow wealthy—that is more than we can stand.

"As men are the natural enemies of snakes, and other vermin, so am I the foe of an abolitionist. Here they come, pressing themselves into the service of our negroes—groaning and lifting up their eyes in pious horror. They push their sympathy too far; but by their actions rivet the chains on the slave faster. They retard the prospect of future improvement in the Northern slave-holding states; and scatter the seeds of discord, misery, and bloodshed between us. And all this is done in the name of philanthropy. But, Mr. Hartley, there is a time coming when 'forbearance will cease to be a virtue;' and when the South will no longer submit to have their feelings outraged—their rights disregarded—and their domestic relations invaded with impunity. The Southron will cease to endure; 'will cease to point calmly to the Constitution;' and the Northerner to the 'higher law;' then will be heard the clash of arms, and then will ruin and shame overcome us."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Mr. Hartley.

"Come, gentlemen, let's liquor," cried Dr. Grant, trying to divert the conversation.

"Now," said Colonel Ormond, as soon as the liquor had been dispatched; "I have one word to say—I have been listening to Herndon attentively—and I can not but admit that he has expressed my feelings much better than I could. I noticed a remark made about the gratitude of negroes. That virtue is not in their catalogue. I will relate an instance, a real fact, none of your fancy sketches got up for effect.

"A Northern gentleman, a lawyer of ability, settled some years ago in one of the Florida parishes in this State. He very soon commanded a share of business. He married the daughter of a respectable old planter in an adjoining parish. The planter owned negroes, and, of course, the son-in-law inherited through his wife. He was strongly imbued with the notion of emancipation. Conversations with his wife tintured her mind with the doctrine, and he then formed a plan for the ultimate emancipation of their slaves.

"About this time he acquired, by the successful defense of a suit, a large tract of land in the State of Illinois, and he then determined to carry into practice his Utopian idea of establishing a colony of free negroes on the land, and for himself to play the Patriarch to his flock.

"In accordance with those feelings, he visited Illinois, had the land surveyed; and, after making his final arrangements, returned and removed all his negroes and family thither. He built a dwelling, and houses, for the negroes, and furnished the houses comfortably. He emancipated all his slaves, and put his theory to the test of practice. Upon the principle of the community farms, he laid out his fields, and gave

the negroes an interest in the crop. The first year they did tolerably well, but grumbled a good deal upon the division. During the spring of the second year, several left him, and by the time the crop was ready to harvest, he had scarcely half of his original force. The negroes who remained were given to intoxication, insubordination and idleness, and he then began to see into the effects of his system. At the end of the second year, all had gone save a few of the superannuated.

"That year was remarkably unhealthy, and his family were exceedingly sickly. Ultimately, he himself was taken ill. His wife sent to the negro houses to request some one to attend on them.

"Latterly, the negroes' services had been grudgingly and reluctantly given; and now he and his family received nothing but impertinence and insult, and an absolute refusal to assist them. What a commentary on the pretended gratitude of the negro! Servants who had been raised by her father refused to wait upon the child in helpless illness. Servants who had been freed from bondage, and put upon terms of equality with the whites; and upon whose breast she had probably often, when a child, been lulled to sleep. This is gratitude—negro gratitude. Pshaw! tell me not of it—it will do well enough for sickly sentimentalists to prate about—philanthropists who have nothing to lose—and old maids like Harriet Martineau to twattle about, but to carry such plans into execution is insanity. No, sir, God made them slaves! slaves they have ever been! human enactments may declare them freemen, but they ever have, and ever will be slaves to their own peculiar characteristics—vices of lust and brutality. God has put his mark upon them, and He said, 'Cursed

be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.' ”

“ Well, that settles it,” cried Dr. Grant, “ and I now propose we return.”

This being agreed to, he gave Pierre in charge of Florat, with orders to return home at once.

“ Slavery is a subject I seldom converse upon,” said Colonel Ormond. “ In the first place it is too much trouble, and in the next place I can not conceive any benefit to be derived from it.”

“ I have listened to you all,” laughed Dr. Grant, “ and heard your arguments, but there is one thing I have noticed which has escaped the observations of all writers on the history of man.”

“ What is this discovery ?” asked Mr. Herndon.

“ You have never seen a negro who would confess himself perfectly well; or one who had not at some time in his life been a horse. Ask any male negro if he is well? He will reply, ‘ No sir, I ain’t ’zactly well,’ or ‘ I feels mighty bad.’ Praise one up, tell him he is a splendid hand and looks strong. He will answer—‘ Well, massa, I ain’t worth much *now* but I *is* seed de time when I *was* a horse.’ ”

A roar of laughter followed the doctor’s description of his discovery, and amid the merriment of boon companions, they drove up to the mansion of Colonel Ormond.

He insisted upon the friends remaining. Mr. Herndon did so, but Dr. Grant excused himself in consequence of the indisposition of his wife.

All the remainder of the evening was spent by the gentlemen in the gallery, in social converse; and when they separated, between Mr. Herndon and Hartley there existed a mutual feeling of esteem.

CHAPTER VII.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh Death!"

HEMANS.

"Si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos?"

MOUNTMOORE.

ON the following morning, Mr. Hartley was sitting in the gallery reading a newspaper. The sound of horses' feet were heard; he looked up; it was a fine looking youth of some fourteen years who alighted. He saluted Mr. Hartley respectfully, and seated himself.

In a few minutes Colonel Ormond entered; he received the youth kindly, and presented him to Mr. Hartley, as Louis Lamotte.

"You knew we had arrived, Louis," he said, "why have you not been over?"

The boy replied in a sweet mellow voice, in which a slight French accent was perceptible, "that he had been paying a visit to a friend down on the coast, and had just returned, but that he had rode over that morning to inform him that Mr. Laufre's negro Bob had died last night."

"I am truly sorry to learn that," said Colonel Ormond, expressing more concern in his countenance, than would have been supposed, at the simple announcement of the death of a slave. He remained

silent a short time, and cast his glance on the youth who sat by, pensive and half melancholy. Louis was dressed in a light hunting-shirt of cloth, with dark fringe, a pair of black pantaloons, and his feet were covered with a neatly-polished boot, while a crimson velvet cap was carelessly thrown on a chair by him. His face was beautiful, and of that deep, subdued, expressive beauty which lasts and makes an impression on the memory. His hair was long, and hung in heavy masses down his neck. His eye was dark and pensive. In fact, his countenance was one which we could not help believing was inspired by genius.

Colonel Ormond aroused himself, and exclaimed, "Louis, the children are in the garden, I hear their voices, join them." He blushed deeply as he seized his cap and hastily left the gallery.

"You may remember, Mr. Hartley," he said, "that yesterday it was said in our conversation, that there were some few exceptions to the general rule, in regard to the attachment of negroes to their masters."

"I remember."

"Well, here now is an example, and it is one of the few instances on record, in which the African race has proved faithful, and exhibited feeling. The slave whom you have heard Louis name, was really faithful and true, and I have no doubt Mr. Laufre is truly distressed. He was a treasure—being old he was exempted from any labor, and his every want gratified; he felt his master's interest and was trustworthy in the extreme. The family were all strongly bound to the negro by ties of real esteem. The incident I refer to endeared him to his master for life. Mr. Laufre and his wife were traveling years ago up the Mississippi river; Bob was with them. When up

the stream some distance, the boat caught fire, the pilot seemed to be seized with a panic, and instead of running the boat on shore, he kept her in the middle of the river. Ultimately wrapped in flames, she was run on the foot of Ozark Island. The boat swung round, and no one could reach the shore. She then suddenly exploded, tearing away all the forward part of the cabin.

The yawl was soon filled with terrified people, leaving in the ladies' cabin, Mr. Laufre, his wife, and Bob. They were alone on that portion of the burning wreck, the flames were wrapping every thing in their destructive embrace, and there seemed nothing but certain death to them.

All the boilers of the boat had exploded, a thousand fragments were scattered around, and many torn and mangled human beings lay about. The scene was awful, and even now Mr. Laufre, when he relates the circumstance, shudders.

There stood himself and his wife, and by them stood Bob. Bob saw there was no other resource left, seized his mistress around the waist, and plunged into the water. He gallantly battled among the floating fragments, and reached the shore in safety. He returned, and brought his master in the same manner. "Was that not a noble deed?"

"Oh, it was! it was!" answered Hartley, "and did he not emancipate the negro?"

"He offered to do so repeatedly, but Bob preferred staying with a good and indulgent master; he has died among kind and sincere friends; and true drops of sorrow will be shed over his grave."

"Suppose," continued he, "you ride over there with me this evening."

"I shall be delighted; but there is a question which I was about to ask you. Who is this youth who just now left us?"

"He is a noble fellow," answered Colonel Ormond, with a smile of partiality. "He is generous, and brave, truthful and honorable."

In reply to an inquiry, he continued; "He is an orphan, his parents were French immigrants, who died with yellow fever, in New Orleans, when he was an infant. A distant relative took him, and having no children, adopted him. His parents were possessed of some property; this was placed in a safe institution, and has been accumulating ever since. His guardian resides about four miles from here, and is a high-minded, honorable gentleman; not like the generality of old Frenchmen, that hate *de dam 'mericans*, and innovations of all kinds. This Louis is a boy of decided talent, but he is almost too fond of hunting to be a good student."

"I have never seen a face with which I was more pleased," said Mr. Hartley.

"You will do well to cultivate his friendship, Mr. Hartley; you will find him a valuable acquisition in your rambles; he understands the gentle art of *vénérerie* and woodcraft. But come, let us take a ride, and when we return and get our dinner, it will be time to go over to see the last of poor Bob."

Louis Lamotte meanwhile sought the garden, where, under the shade of a large live-oak, throwing its protecting arms over them, he found Marie and the two girls. She was sewing some light fabric, while they, having thrown down the book which they had brought to read, were arranging bouquets, and making garlands of flowers.

He came upon them suddenly ; his frank approach and the exclamations of delight, with which he was greeted, told plainly that he was no unwelcome or unusual visitor, as indeed he was not, for many were the pleasant and happy days he spent with them.

Both the children sprang to meet him, and Marie received him with a quiet and pleased smile. He was soon deeply engaged in the same occupation with the children, and they were at the same time delighted with his affectionate efforts to please. He amused them by giving a history of his late visit, and adventures, but cast a shade of sorrow on the group when he mentioned the death of "old Bob," whom all knew, and loved. Thus in pleasant intercourse, the time passed until the hour for dinner.

Old grumbling Sally, was some distance off, busy over a bed of "*yarbs*," and directing the labors of a lot of little negroes in weeding. She was, as usual, giving full vent to her spleen.

"Now you Phillis, why don't you mind me ; I neber did see sich a nigger in all my born days, I tells you to pull up de pusley from out dat bed ob tansey, and you goes right straight to pullin' up parsnips, hard's ever you can. De fust thing you knows I'll bounce you, nigger. You Tid, whar is you carrying dat ar wheelbarrow? put it down ; de Lord he knows I has more trouble wid you all dan you is worth, I don't know what little niggers is made fur ; for my part I never could see any use in 'em, but to fret old creeturs with ; Lord knows I has a monstrous hard time of it ; I wish I was back in old South Calliny agin ; I tink de Lord will hear my prayers, and—Now, Colin why don't you get to work? what is you put here

for, hey? Loo, I raly b'leve you is bin pullin' dem currants."

"No, I clar I ain't, Aunt Sally" cried, the terrified little wretch, "I jes tetched my finger on dat bush, and dey dropped off."

"You is tellin' a lie, I know you is; stick out your tongue. Dar now, I knowed it; you ain't? Well I'll soon see, I'll give you a 'metic and I know I kin find out dat way."

"Aunt Sally, Aunt Sally!" called out some one from the Quarter.

"Dar it is, agin, Aunt Sally! Aunt Sally! all de time. What kin you do, widout Aunt Sally? What you want?" she exclaimed in a loud, sharp voice.

"Little Hanna done come in from de field wid de fever," was the answer.

"Oh, yes, sick, of course, all de time sick; what business she gittin' sick, couldent she put it off till Sunday?"

"Yes, an I reckon you will put off dying *till Sunday* some of dese times," exclaimed one of the little negroes, as soon as old Sally had hobbled off.

"Be a mighty good ting if she 'd do it right away," replied another.

"I'd have all dat coffee she got in her chist," chimed in a third.

Old Sally was very strict in what she thought was her duty, and she made the little darkies "toe the mark;" hence they bore her no good will. She on her part, having got into a habit of grumbling, came out on all occasions. She stated seriously, "Dat de fact was, no body what had little niggers round dem, to tend to could go to heaven—(a remark which by the way more

than one accomplished Southern lady had made), cause dey made folks commit a heap of sin."

But Sally was a systematic grumbler, nothing escaped her. If a light drouth came on; she would walk her gallery, seize a stick and bang some innocent dog, who was trying to make an honest living by picking up the scraps. Then she would go to the edge of the porch, cast her eye up; "Well de ting is pinte now, no rain, de garden is as dry as a ash bank, ebery ting dying, de corn in de field is curling up, no corn for next year, de cane is done gone, 'tain't as big as my little finger, no crop dis year." She would sit down and rock herself to and fro for some time, to work off her extra spleen. Perhaps a little cloud would arise, the wind change, and a distant roll of thunder be heard; she would spring off, and up would go her weather eye again. Then would she smile, "Tank de Lord for dat much; I prayed hard for dat." Such a getting up of chickens, gathering in of clothes, and placing of water barrels. The cloud would pass over. "Oh, I knowed it, I knowed it wan't agwine to rain, jest cause it's me wants it;" and, here in a perfect storm of indignation, she would bang the door after her, and retire. But let a good rain come, she would be found in the garden, as busy as a bee, setting out young cabbage or lettuce plants. "Here come anoder shower. Oh yes, now it's began it don't know when to stop," and again would she seek her cabin, to give vent to her feelings.

Poor Sally! you are only a representative of many grumblers in this world, who have, by practice, reduced the thing to a habit.

It was late in the evening when Colonel Ormond and Mr. Hartley mounted, and rode off toward Mr.

Laufre's; but after they set out, Marie took the girls, and, with Louis, again went to her favorite haunt under the live-oak in the garden. They had not long been there, before Pierre, learning that his master had gone, came sneaking around the garden-fence, to where the party were. He had in his hand a large bunch of water-lily, which he declared he had brought to Misses Zoe and Estelle "plum from de lake." His step was still unsteady, and he was not quite over the effects of his late frolic.

"Pierre, you have been drinking," exclaimed Marie, as he presented himself before her.

"No, I ain't, Miss Marie."

"Oh! Pierre! Pierre! how often have I begged you not to drink so much. You don't know how bad it looks in an old man like you."

"Me, Miss Marie?" exclaimed the old scamp, in apparent surprise; "Me? 'Pon my word, I ain't toch a drop to-day."

"Why, you stagger, Pierre! you are drunk!"

"Oh! no, Miss Marie; Pierre gettin' old: it's weakness. I was just gwine to ax you for a little dram to keep up de circulation."

"No, Pierre! not a drop! You have been drinking: you can not deceive me."

Pierre, well knowing that when once she refused him, it was useless to press the matter, walked off slowly, until he got beyond the garden-gate, when he boldly and briskly stepped up to the gallery, which Robert was just then sweeping out. "Bob! Bob!" said Pierre, "wake up, horse-fly, and gib dis old nigger a dram."

"No, you don't, old boy."

"Miss Marie sent me."

"You don't catch dis here nigger dis week," replied Bob, grinning; "an' you don't get no dram from me."

"Look here, nigger! I'll go call Miss Marie, and she'll make you mind. She sent me, sah! Do you tink I'd a come 'dout she sent me? Don't you see how wet I is bin—me what's just saved the life of a fellow-cretur."

"Now, dat's good! You, Pierre? you save his life?"

"Yes, sah! One of Mr. Le Baron's boys fell into de lake, and I jump in jest as he was a-drownin', and pull him out. Dat's how, sah!"

Bob looked at him in admiration, and then said, "Well, I declar! but is you sure Miss Marie telled you to come to me for a dram?"

"Yes, sah! didnt I tell you so? Jest call her, and ax her, sah, and see if I ain't tellin' you de truth."

Bob was satisfied, and brought out a stiff drink of brandy, which Pierre at once disposed of.

"Well, now," muttered he to himself, as he walked off, "dat's what I call policy. I walked into dat nigger's feelings good! Well, I is a great nigger, sure!" and, with this consolatory reflection, he turned into the Quarter-yard to his house, to sleep off the fatigues of the day.

In the mean time, Colonel Ormond and his guest were wending their way to Mr. Laufre's. The house was situated on the river-bank. Upon riding up to the gate, and entering the yard, Mr. Laufre, a portly, handsome, middle-aged gentleman, met them. He conducted them into the gallery, where seats were already placed. The gallery is an all-important portion of the house in the South; and no where is more

time spent in them, or are they more valued than on the Louisiana coast.

Mr. Hartley was presented.

"Ah! Colonel Ormond, welcome to you and your friend. I am glad to see you."

"Well, Mr. Laufre," observed Colonel Ormond, "I am sorry that you have been so unfortunate as to lose poor Bob."

"Ah! sir, do not mention it. I would sooner have lost half-a-dozen of my best hands. Not for his intrinsic worth, but because, gentlemen, he was a faithful fellow. He was raised up with me, had been my playmate in childhood, and my companion in later years; and, in truth, I felt for him almost the affection of a brother. He felt that my interest, and my honor, was as dear to him as to myself; and then, you know that he risked his life to save mine."

"I have known Bob for a number of years, and have always respected him."

"Ah! Colonel, he was not like a common negro; he had the soul of a white man. But I must not repine. I was with him until he died, and, if there ever was a Christian, he was one. I am much distressed."

The same air of sorrow showed itself upon the faces of the whole family; and, beyond courteous expressions of welcome and kindness, not a word was spoken at the supper-table.

Bob, as we have seen, was really beloved by the family; and nothing which could contribute to his comfort or happiness was refused. He had long ceased labor, not on account of age, but infirmity; but still he kept an eye to his master's interests. The little negroes would ever pretend to be industrious when he happened to cast his eye on them. Many a fence-

rail was saved from destruction by the stern countenance of old Bob, who always came just at the moment; and often it was that a few minutes' work on the levee by stuffing moss in a craw-fish hole, saved many days' labor in the end. He knew all the hogs by name, and could tell in a moment if a pig had disappeared the previous night. He could be seen any warm day in summer, fishing for shrimps, mending his nets, or rooting out a big weed along the fence. He was a declared enemy to all kinds of vermin; and polecats, minxes, and coons, were his abhorrence. But poor Bob grew weaker, his step was tottering and feeble, and the time came for him to lie down and die. The summons came, and found Bob ready. To Mrs. Laufre's question, "Are you afraid to die, Bob?" he replied, "Oh! no, missus! Bob ain't afeered to die. I is tried to do my duty, and I puts my trust in de goodness of de Lord."

Bob died, peacefully and calmly; his master stood by him, and he smiled and breathed his last sigh, saying, "God bless you, massa!"

A hum of gathering voices announced that the negroes were assembling in Bob's cabin, to hold their simple funeral rites. Mr. Laufre requested the gentlemen to accompany him into the Quarter. They paused on the levee awhile, to allow the negroes to gather. The buzz of voices informed them that they were gathering; and the three gentlemen now turned their course thitherward.

As they neared the cabin, they could hear the sobs of grief, and low murmurs of mourners, which were more expressive than the sorrow of hired sympathy at aristocratic funerals.

They entered. There were assembled some hun-

dred negroes, of all ages and sexes, from the hoary patriarch to the giddy child.

In the center of the house, on a bench, stood the coffin, incasing the remains of old Bob. There were candles burning on and near the coffin, and simple refreshments on a table in a corner. They were chanting a low, mournful hymn; and, as soon as their master entered with his friends, they all arose, but continued the song. One of the older negroes handed some chairs, which were placed near the door.

As soon as the hymn was over, the officiating negro preacher, of whom there is generally one, or at least an elderly "class-leader," on every large plantation, arose. He was a venerable old man, with hair white as snow, and with a fine, pleasing expression of countenance. A full suit of black distinguished him, as also a very white neckerchief, and a stiff collar. He commenced with a fervent and impassioned prayer, in which, although not much acquaintance with grammar was displayed, a deep and sincere earnestness was perceptible. He thanked the Almighty that, although one brother was gathered, like a ripe sheaf, still they were spared. He thanked Him for all His mercies, and asked a blessing on their labors. For his dear master, mistress, and children, he asked the choicest blessings of Heaven.

After the prayer, another hymn was sung, the refrain of which was:

"Happy soul, thy days are ended,
All thy mourning days below;
Go, by angel-guards attended,
To the sight of Jesus go."

Again he arose, and in a solemn manner spoke of the occasion which drew them together. "My

friends," he said, " we have 'sembled here to-night to pay de last tribute to our departed brother. A few days ago, he was alive and strong, and with us, and now he is treadin' them unknown shores beyond de grave. Ah! my friends, he was prepared to go, he told his missus he wasent afeard to die, an' go home to Jesus. Oh! be you ready likewise, for you know not 'when de bridegroom cometh.' Attend to de interests of your immortal souls; cast your eyes to de things of another world, where sorrow and sadness don't come. How vain and fleeting, my friends, is all de things of dis life compared with 'ternity. Oh! then, lay up your treasures above, and put your 'pendence in Jesus' love."

In this style he went on for half an hour. At length he drew to a close. He ended by a handsome eulogy upon poor Bob, and begged his hearers to imitate his example and follow him to the happy land.

During all this time, the assembly were dissolved in tears, and at times, when he grew eloquent and excited, the agitation was great among them, and the broken exclamations of "Amen!" "Bless de Lord!" "Gone to heaven, sure!" "De good old cretur!" "Lord, save us!" were often heard.

Another prayer, which called forth more cries and tears, more groans, and even misplaced and sometimes ludicrous sentences, was made.

Hartley caught himself, more than once, smiling, and then, the next minute, he experienced a strange feeling of choking and a watery suffusion of the eyes.

At last it was over, and several of the men went out, and got torches of pine, or light wood, as it is termed, which had been obtained from some steam-

boat by the negroes, for the purpose of kindling fires. The top of the coffin was now raised for the last time, that all might get a parting look at poor Bob. Mr. Laufre arose and went to it. He gazed at the corpse a few moments amid the most profound silence. Two great tears slowly rolled down his cheeks.

"Poor old fellow!" he exclaimed; "friend of my boyhood! you are in peace! your journey is over. My people," he continued, looking around earnestly, "behold the end of a faithful servant. All of you have known Bob for years; you have never known him guilty of a mean action. He was ever mild and humane. His whole life has been one of unceasing devotion to his master, and his end was as peaceful as the setting sun. He gained the love of all, and his master is as grieved at his loss as at that of a white friend. Take example from him. Bob died a Christian; he breathed his last in his master's arms." He finished, and, pressing the cold, hard hand, turned away to hide his emotion. The tears and expressions of grief were redoubled, and many a blessing for their kind master was mingled with those drops.

From one end of the room arose a little old negro. He was a kind of opposition preacher, who seemed determined, even at the last moment, to have a say-so in the matter. All the evening, his brightness had been dimmed by the other preacher, and all he could do was to groan and blubber like the "common niggers," and in concert with them; but now, seeing a chance to slip in a word, he arose. He was a negro, who had been recently brought from the piney woods, and he determined that no *coast* nigger should outdo him. He began:

"My beloved friends, you is all heerd what master

is said, and he speaks de truth, de Lord knows. We all must 'member his words, and try and do every thing what he wants us. Poor old Bob is gone where he can't get back; but if his sperit is 'lowed to look down on this meeting, he is mightily pleased. Let us sing a hymn while de brethren makes de final 'rangements." He then struck up a doleful, melancholy tune to the following words :

"Old Satan is like a howling dog,
He throwed blocks in my way;
Jesus was my bosom friend,
And he cast dem all away.
Oh Lord, remember me,
Remember Calvary!
And while you is a 'membrin' round,
Oh Lord, remember me.

"As I was a lyin' on my bed,
A making my cries to de Lord;
He come and eased my akin' head,
Wid de sweetness of his word.
Oh Lord, remember me,
Remember, etc.

"You need not crave for richness,
You need n't to dress so fine,
The crown that my Lord gib to me,
The sun can't neber outshine.
Oh Lord, remember me,
Remember," etc.

Both Colonel Ormond and Hartley were half-inclined to laugh, as irreverent as it was, at this serio-comic song; but the negroes felt the inspiration, and entered into it with spirit, it being one of their own songs, the time, measure and words suiting them exactly; and, indeed, it would be hard to induce them to believe the song was not truly orthodox, and one of the Church collection.

Mr. Laufre made a sign to Colonel Ormond, and they left the cabin, proceeding to the house.

The negroes had now lit their torches, and the coffin, being fastened, final arrangements were made, refreshments were handed around, and a *bush-light*, as it is called, was kindled before the cabin. This is a superstition of the negroes, and, probably, derived from the remnant of some old custom in Africa. It is four small forks set in the ground, with cross pieces put on them, covered with earth; the fat pine is then kindled, and constantly replenished. The superstition is, that the soul of the departed continues hovering over the remains until it is finally laid in the earth, and it then takes its flight. The light is for the purpose of allowing the spirit to have a good view of the operations. It is called the "*death fire*."

The gentlemen joined the ladies of the family in the gallery, when a conversation soon commenced; but through the pauses could be heard the exhortations of some of the older negroes, and the bursts of grief of others, mingled with snatches of hymns, in which the solemn and ludicrous were strangely blended. One, which seemed to be a favorite, by the manner they all joined in it, struck Hartley as peculiarly droll. It ran thus—

"Jesus, he died for me—e,
 Jesus, he died for you—ou,
 And he neber will die no more,
 Oh! Shepherd, war ar' you—ou.
 You promised de Lord to take care of de Lamb,
 And you let one go astray.

"Yonder comes de carriage,
 Wid de inside filled wid love,
 De fore-wheels runs by faith,
 And de hind-wheels rolls by grace."
 You promised," etc.

More was sung, which he could not hear, as the torch-bearers gathered around the door; and a murmur arose from the cabin—a dead silence followed—there were groans and lamentations, and at length the coffin appeared borne by six negro men. The sight was novel and interesting—the dark and swarthy assembly—the black coffin, with its bearers—the flashing lights, casting a ruddy reflection over the whole scene; and the various expressions of sorrow which, partly forced—for the negro is passionately attached to ceremony and pageantry—and partly pure, formed an exhibition that, to one of the gentlemen at least, was singularly interesting.

"This, I presume, is the first thing of the kind you have ever seen, Mr. Hartley," remarked Mr. Laufre.

"It is; and I must admit it is novel to me."

"There is much of the ludicrous in their ceremony, to a refined taste, and to one who is unused to them."

"Yes; but I imagine an affecting earnestness which pleases me; and they seem more taken with religion than I ever thought."

"Why, sir, as to that, I believe I have among my negroes some who are religious, as far as negro nature will allow them to be, but they are very few."

"Do you allow your negroes religious instruction?"

"The condition of the negro is much meliorated in that respect; formerly they never knew what it was; but now, public sentiment among our planters has changed; and there is scarcely a plantation which does not either have, on every other Sabbath, preaching to the negroes, on the place, or at a meeting-house in the neighborhood."

"Do you think they are benefited?"

"Most of them, sir, assume religion for a cloak;

but, on the whole, we think it in many instances benefits them."

"I have been informed that the negro was purposely kept in the darkest ignorance; and that they never had any privileges of this nature."

"They have religious instruction, sir; but they receive it very badly. It is not in their nature to be really pious, and the best observation will bear me out. You may have them gathered together and preached to—and prayed with—you may get them to shouting and yelling—turn them loose, and in an hour they will be found in a neighbor's hen-roost, or among his young pigs. They are an incorrigible set; but there are among them some good ones, just as there are some bad masters. As a rule, however, you will find that the planters of the South are constantly inventing new plans for the melioration of the condition of the slave."

Just then, the bustle of the negroes at the Quarter ceased, and they at once proceeded to the grave, with slow and measured step.

After an hour spent in pleasant discourse, Colonel Ormond proposed riding, and, refusing a kind invitation to stay all night, he and his guest mounted and rode off.

Few words passed between them, for both were busy with their own thoughts.

CHAPTER VIII.

"A man can smile and smile, and be a villain."

Servant. "There be a gentleman at the door come to see your honor."

Joconde. "Yes; well, what is he like? yet stay, show him in."

UNPUB. DRAMA.

WHEN Colonel Ormond and Mr. Hartley reached home, they were informed that a stranger had arrived in the evening, but, as it was late, had then retired.

The next morning Mr. Hartley was up early and taking a walk. He bent his steps toward the Quarter. In her gallery old Sally stood washing some common crockery before getting breakfast for the children and sick. She was humming a doleful kind of tune when Mr. Hartley came up.

"Well, aunty," he said, "how do you find yourself this morning?"

"Sarvant, sir," she replied, courtesying very low; "bless de Lord I finds myself toleble well, 'cept a pain in de back, an a little pain in de head, an a mighty misery in my side."

"Well, it appears to me," said he, laughing, "that you must be be *tolably* bad off with all those pains."

"Yes, sir, tank God I *is* right bad off, but it can't be 'spected to be any better, for I is a old cretur and has a heap to do."

"I suppose you have a great deal depending on you."

"Dat's de solemn truth sir; I has more to do an any nigger on dis place. Master's promised time and agin to put somebody to help me, but nobody ever thinks of de poor ole nigger 'cept when dey wants 'em to do somethin."

"What do you have to do?"

"Why, sir, I has to tend in de hospital, and to de little niggers, and a heap ob oder things."

"You appear to have plenty of time though."

"Oh, yes, sir! I has time to set down and rest, and I has old Aunt Dinah and Cinta to help me 'casionally when I wants 'em, for dey don't do nothin' 'cept lay up an grumble."

"You never grumble, Aunt Sally?"

"No, sir, I doesent; 't ain't right."

Hartley laughed outright. "Were you born in this country?"

"No, sir, thank God I ain't no *gray owl** nigger, I come from old South Calliny, I did."

"I suppose you don't like this country as much as you did ole South Calliny?"

"Lord, no, *sir*! It's a toleble good country for some things and mighty bad for tothers. Ole South Calliny is a long ways head of dis country, dere ain't no meetsketurns dar, and dere ain't no lightood here, dat's de only 'jection to it."

"What is *lightood*, Aunt Sally?"

"Why, sir, don't know what *lightood* is? it's pine, fat pine, dat's what 't is."

"Oh, indeed! Well, are you a member of the church?"

"Is you a preacher, sir?" answered she looking at him in a quizzical manner.

* Creole.

"No," he answered laughing, "I am not, I wish I was."

"Well, no, I ain't in de church, and I don't want to be, for dere is more debilment carried on by dem what is in de church dan you knows on."

"Aunt Sally you ought to join the church, it makes people better."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed she. "Why massa, you makes me laugh; de very niggers what makes de most fuss 'bout 'ligion is de very ones what ain't got no more 'ligion dan a terripin; dey rolls dey eyes up, but all de time dey is thinking of some debilment, and what dey kin steal; no sir, dey puts on 'ligion like a nigger puts on a blanket—to hide de dirt."

"Pierre belongs to the church, I believe?"

"Pierre, Pierre? ha, ha! he Zambo nigger; Zambo ain't got no soul; and all de preaching Mr. Hickory-bottom do, ain't goin' to make him no better."

"Who is Mr. Hickorybottom?"

"He is our preacher, a mighty good man, larns de little niggers dey catakiz, and preach twice a month, but it don't do 'em any good."

"Well, Aunt Sally, here is half a dollar to buy you a new handkerchief to go to meeting in."

The old woman eagerly clutched the money, and amid a profusion of thanks he turned away.

When Colonel Ormond arose in the morning he found a card on his dressing-table bearing the name of "*Daniel Talbot, Boston.*" He rung the bell and Robert appeared.

"How came this here?" he asked.

"The strange gentleman, sir, that came here last night, gave it to me, sir."

"When?"

"Last night, sir."

"Hem! where is he?"

"In the parlor, sir, waiting for you."

"Very well, go and see that there is a fire in the room, and some late newspapers."

"Yes, sir."

"Talbot! Talbot," he exclaimed, as he gazed in an absent manner at the card which he held in his hand.

"Where have I heard that name? It sounds familiar! By my soul, it can not be that he is one of the Talbots of Connecticut, one of our connections. Let me see, Talbot married a relation of ours; he was from New England."

He arranged his toilet and descended the steps to the parlor.

A young man of middle height, apparently of about twenty-six years, dressed in black, was leaning over a table attentively examining some prints. He arose when Colonel Ormond entered, and advanced—

"You have my card, Colonel Ormond, I presume."

"Mr. Talbot, I am happy to know you, sir, and if I am not mistaken, you are a family connection."

"Even a relation, colonel," he replied smiling, "for I am the son of a relation on the maternal side, and may be called a cousin."

"As you are the first one whom I have ever known, I shall be pleased to own the relationship. But have we any other relations in Boston?"

"None, nor in Connecticut; I believe I am the only one."

"How did you become aware of my residence?"

"Well, you must know that there is an old lady in New York State, who is a connection of my mother's; I called on her, as I was on business, and she gave me

a history of our whole family. I took down your address, and when I left Boston, a friend gave me a letter to a young man, who is a clerk in New Orleans. I presented my letter, and expressed my wishes; he consulted a kind of directory, and we found your residence in the city; your agent told us where the plantation was."

"You have exhibited a good deal of tact, for a stranger," said Colonel Ormond.

"You forget that I am a Yankee," replied he laughing.

"Well, I am glad you have done so, the more as you are the first of my relations who has ever been to the South. When did you arrive in New Orleans?"

"A week ago, sir; I would have sought you out sooner, but I occupied myself in seeking for a situation."

"You have then, no settled business, Mr. Talbot?"

"No, sir, I was engaged in the dry goods business in Boston, but was unfortunate."

"The fate of many; but I think you will find no difficulty in obtaining business in the city."

Here a servant entered and called Colonel Ormond out to attend to something, and Mr. Talbot was left alone. He sat awhile, and then timidly glanced around.

"A pretty fine old cock," he said in a low voice, "and seems to be a good liver; I wonder if he has got any family; I must look sharp, and act mighty polished."

Colonel Ormond entered the room just afterward, and, as he drew up his chair, remarked—"Mr. Talbot, as you have not engaged in any business yet, I may be of service to you; at any rate, you will remain with us

until you do engage in something, for we of the South pride ourselves on our hospitality."

"Colonel, you are too kind," remarked he, in an affected tone.

"I beg you will not think so, sir."

"Where did you leave your baggage?" he added, rising.

"I left it at the little town below here, where I landed."

"I will send a servant after it."

As Ormond passed through the library he found Marie in tears. He started back in astonishment, "Why, Marie, what is the cause of these tears? Speak!" he approached and spoke kindly to her.

"Oh, Charles," she answered, raising her head, and looking earnestly on him through her tears—"Forgive me, I am foolish, I feel unhappy this morning, but the arrival of this stranger from the North, and, old Celeste's prophecy." The same idea at that moment struck Colonel Ormond, and he started as if stung by some reptile; but, instantly recovering himself, he continued: "Nay, Marie, this is very childish, this arrival of a mere youth, has no connection with that stuff. Come, Marie, remember that he is a relative, and I must insist that you treat him with respect."

"Charles, you well know that your will is my law; I have no doubt but I am wrong, but I can not help feeling sometimes that there is a sad future for us."

"Do not give way to those fancies, Marie; they are dangerous, remember; there is a good and kind Being above, who watches over us all; trust in Him."

"You are right, Charles, you have taught me a lesson."

"There, my Marie," he answered, drawing her toward him, and her beautiful head falling on his bosom; "come, don yourself in your most splendid robe, deck yourself in jewels, and come forth, in a blaze of beauty, to astonish, and dazzle his cold Northern imagination." She looked up fondly, and smiled at this sally, while he pressed her ripe red lips, gazed on her in admiration, and drank in her beauty. He then called Pierre, and ordered him to go for the baggage of Mr. Talbot.

When Talbot found himself alone, he arose, and a pleased expression passed over his features; he glanced at a pier glass, which reflected his whole figure, and then stretched himself.

"Well," he said "this is a streak of luck sure, to find a good kind relative, and a nice comfortable home, all at once. This is better than standing behind a counter selling pins and tape, at fifteen dollars a month; he looks like a jolly old fellow, and seems to have plenty of negroes; I wonder how much he is worth.

"And there," he continued, walking to the window, "there's the sugar-house, and the sugar-cane being made into sugar. I heard of a poor fellow once, who threw down his ox-whip, as the first steamboat passed down the river. '*By gosh*, I'll have one of them things if it costs me fifty dollars.' Now, like that fellow, I'll have one of *them* things, if it costs me my life. How grand it must make a man feel, to look around, and know that all he sees is his. Well, I will play the moral good boy, and see what can be made out of it."

With this worthy determination, he walked up and down the room, and ruminated on the prospects which seemed to be opening on him. Some twenty minutes passed in this manner, when Colonel Ormond again

entered the room. He drew up a chair to the fire, and the two were soon engaged in a desultory conversation, which lasted until breakfast. During the first moments of their acquaintance, Ormond did not have leisure to mark individual peculiarities, as they presented themselves, or to give his guest so attentive a scrutiny as now.

In person, as we have said, Talbot was of medium height, his face was long, and rather wide at the angle of the jaws. His eyes were deeply set in their orbits, and of a light gray. The lips were thin, and drawn tightly around the teeth, which were white, even and brilliant, and were exhibited in laughing and speaking. The chin was sharp and peaked and thin, the neck long and slim. His hair was a light brown and worn short. There was a restlessness, an uneasy wandering of the eyes, an aversion to meet a fair and honest gaze, and while Colonel Ormond was easy and self-possessed, he appeared as if ill at ease. He had a look of intelligence and conversed well, but it was a kind of low, hang-dog, sneaking intelligence, a kind of prudent, careful weighing out of words, as if cautious of committing himself; as if all his actions were governed by a hidden movement, a powerful but concealed spring.

To one who was suspicious, those restless eyes and twitching hands, the puckered lips and cautious speech, would have afforded matter for speculation; but Colonel Ormond was all honor, and never dreamed of the true character of the viper he was about to nestle in his bosom. He little dreamed that the demon, which ruled the soul of his guest, was *avarice*. Born and raised in a circle which was far below independence, he had looked up to the wealthy as great and happy

beings in a different sphere. He acted accordingly. To his superiors, he was a sneaking and submissive slave, a fawning hypocrite; to his inferiors, he was haughty and imperious, heartless and cruel.

He had intelligence enough, though, to conceal the failings which he was conscious of possessing. He even sometimes tried to subdue them. He had some accomplishments, and quite a good education; he drew very well and played the flute. He also had a good mechanical turn, and had made many friends among the children, by the dexterity with which he used his knife in carving curious things in wood. But he lacked a high and manly principle, did not observe the truth, and, in regard to honor, he could not comprehend the term, he could use the word in its right place, speak volubly about it and assume an ingenuous air; but the conception of the principle was beyond his power.

As Colonel Ormond surveyed the countenance of his guest, he experienced a strange, unaccountable feeling of shrinking and repugnance, as if he had touched a venomous reptile, and he almost repented the hasty invitation he had given; but when he reflected a moment, he felt half ashamed of these emotions, and reasoned with himself that he saw through a distorted medium, that he was prejudiced, and he even hastened to make up by kindness his want of generosity. But, although he endeavored to conquer his prejudices, still he could not hide from himself the fact that he did not like his kinsman.

Talbot, on the other hand, cast furtive glances at his companion, for he could not bear the calm, steady, placid look of Colonel Ormond. He did not dislike him, but he felt humbled by the contrast; and a

species of malicious envy sprang up in his breast, as he thought of the vast difference between them in the scale of social being, and of the supposed wealth and importance of his host; and he expressed a mental wish that he might profit by the connection. Talbot was possessed of a deep and shrewd cunning, and hid within his own bosom his evil thoughts and feelings.

Breakfast was now announced, and Mr. Hartley came in. Talbot was presented as a relative by Colonel Ormond.

Hartley was a far-seeing man, and instinctively disliked Talbot from the first, and imagined that he saw in the workings of his countenance the symptoms of a debased and double-dealing mind. But these fancies he suppressed in their birth, for he was a high-bred gentleman.

The three breakfasted alone; in fact, Ormond was embarrassed in what manner to present Marie to him. As his wife, he could not, for he loathed deception, and he shrunk from stating in broad terms their connection and Marie's condition. He loved her with devotion, and she deserved it, and he now more than ever regretted the procrastination of a necessary step, in regard to her, which he knew sooner or later must be taken.

Hartley had never been regularly presented to her, but his own observation and good sense made him comprehend in a short time how matters stood; he saw that she was gloriously beautiful, and wondered why Colonel Ormond did not publicly acknowledge her as his wife, but he kept those thoughts to himself. He had been enlightened by Dr. Grant, who, jealous of the honor of his friend, in a delicate manner hinted

at it. Hartley understood him, and when he did meet her, it was with profound respect.

Marie often took her meals in her own room, and it caused no surprise that she did not appear on this morning.

Talbot was advised by Colonel Ormond to ride over and superintend the removal of his baggage himself.

An hour after breakfast he was sitting on the gallery indulging in his cigar, when Dr. Grant rode up. He was glad of it, for Colonel Ormond had ridden a portion of the way with Talbot, and he was entirely alone.

"Well, Mr. Hartley," he exclaimed familiarly, as he threw his bridle over a picket, "how are you this morning? I thought I would ride over, see you all, and chat a while. But who is that gander-shanked chap who is going along the road with Ormond? I saw them as I came through the field."

"Oh, he is a relative; a fresh Yankee just caught."

"Phew!" whistled the doctor. "Well—they do make some queer ones up there sure, and I don't like his looks certainly."

"Nor do I; but it would scarcely become me to say it."

"What is he doing here?"

"God knows; I came in this morning, and he was in the parlor; he may have sprung from the ground, but I think he has just arrived from the North."

"Well, I never knew before that Ormond ever had any relatives."

"Doctor, you do not look as well as you did, when I last saw you."

"It is anxiety, Mr. Hartley," he answered, becoming grave. "The health of my wife is bad; indeed, I am

afraid it is declining daily ; she has a very severe pain in her chest, and a cough ; consumption is hereditary."

"I hope your anxiety has exaggerated her disease."

"God grant that it may, Mr. Hartley ; but I have serious thoughts of going to Havana for her health.' He paused a while, and silently meditated, then suddenly exclaimed : "How long do you remain with us, Mr. Hartley ?"

"I fear doctor that my stay is limited ; I came here, a perfect stranger, at the invitation of Colonel Ormond, and I am only allowing time to receive replies to my letters on business ; but, doctor, go where I may, I never shall forget the noble kindness and courtesy, I have received at his hands. He is all that a man could wish to be."

"I fully agree with you, Mr. Hartley, and, I appreciate as fully as you, the excellence of our friend ; but, by the way," he added, "what a pity it is, that he is placed in such a situation in regard to a woman every way worthy to become his wife!"

"Why is it that he hesitates in the matter?"

"Simply shame, dislike to give *éclat* to the fact that she is not his wife, and still a slave."

"Indeed !"

"Yes, and more the shame ; I have reasoned with him about it, and he has promised me that he will very soon carry it into effect, but alas !—this Southern failing, procrastination. But Mr. Hartley, I am sorry you are thinking of going so soon ; I was in hopes of having you with us for some time."

"I thank you, doctor ; but it is important that I return North soon ; I am settling up my own affairs, and it is probable that I may return, and live permanently

in the South ; I find the winters at the North are too severe for me."

"Yes, and the manners and customs, also."

"Oh, you forget that I am a native of the North."

"Ay, but you take to the South, naturally."

"I like it extremely, I admit."

"To return to Ormond," said the doctor, lowering his voice, "you see what a very disagreeable situation it places him in."

"It certainly does."

"And she is so handsome, and good; and so accomplished. You have conversed with her?"

"Seldom; but I perceive she is educated."

"In point of beauty, she excels any thing I ever saw; her countenance is so expressive, and Madonna-like, so pensive and sweet."

"Well it is a great pity. Here is a noble, whole-souled fellow, he loves a woman who is as beautiful as a houri, and as good as an angel; and still he can't present her as his wife, when she would be well received in any society. Here she is without company, and must be *ennuied* to death."

"And they have two as beautiful children as I ever saw."

"Ormond is not really ashamed to acknowledge her; for matches of this kind are common in the West Indies, and even in this State; she is fair too."

"I admire that peculiar rich tint; it shows a warm, and generous blood. She is a Creole, is she not?"

"A Creole!" laughed the doctor. "You Northern people always commit an error about that. You think a Creole is a Mulatto, but of a very light color?"

"Yes, certainly, is it not so?"

"No, a Creole is a mere term taken from the Span-

ish, meaning a native descended from European ancestors. Now some would suppose her a Quadroon, which is seven eighths white and one eighth black ; but she is not. She is a Quinteroon, fifteen sixteenths white, and one sixteenth black. There are many such in our State, and no one even thinks of casting a reproach on them."

"Well, she is a dignified lady, and would do honor to any circle."

"My sentiments exactly ; but I understand you were over at Laufre's, at Bob's funeral?"

"Yes, Colonel Ormond and I rode over."

"Well, Mr. Hartley, let us walk."

Accordingly, they sauntered out, and slowly walked to the river. As they reached the bank, Louis Lamotte rode up. He leaped from his horse with grace, and came forward, saluting them both. He was a great favorite with the doctor, who replied to him kindly. He had a string of snipe, which he had shot that morning, to present to Marie. After a few words, he left them for more pleasant society, and the gentlemen continued their walk.

CHAPTER IX.

"Yet had he friends
And they went forth to cheer him on his way."

II.

AFTER dinner, Colonel Ormond requested Dr. Grant to walk with him. They went into the garden, and in a sheltered nook surrounded by *arbores-vitæ*, they seated themselves.

"Doctor," he said, with hesitation, "I fear you will think me a great fool; but I have placed myself in a ridiculous position." The doctor remained silent, for he knew what was coming. "The fact is I have been a fool," resumed he, after waiting a moment to see if the doctor would speak. "I have extended an invitation to a young man who comes from the North, and claims to be a kinsman, without taking into consideration the situation I occupy in regard to Marie. Now, doctor, we have been fast friends for a number of years, and I feel that I can unbosom myself to you: I owe justice to her."

"You do, Ormond, you do," replied he earnestly, "and it is a shame on your manhood that you have not long ago consummated your union; the sooner you have this long-retarded justice done the better; I speak plainly, and use the language of a friend, Ormond."

"That is as it should be, doctor, but you well know that my delay has been caused by—"

"Your old habit of procrastination; why, Ormond, if you did not have an overseer, your plantation would not bring you in seed corn; you take things too easy, and defer what you should attend to; it is indolence and a reluctance to blazon forth this matter."

"Doctor, you have judged me rightly in this matter, and I see I must, I must attend to it."

"Do it for your own sake, Ormond; do it for hers; for your children; make them legitimate."

"I am a blind fool and an idiot!" passionately exclaimed Ormond, who, although generally calm, was, when aroused, of a hurricane mood. "But, doctor, this fellow Talbot—it is necessary as long as he remains here, that he should sometimes meet her, and then you know the negroes—the truth will out."

"I understand you," said the doctor, "and I agree with you, it is much better that the truth should be told him. I will undertake the matter if he does not already know it."

"I leave it to you, doctor."

"I will attend to it."

"I thank you; I do not know why it is, but to this person I have taken a slight dislike, an aversion. I am ashamed to own it, but there is a something about him which I can not fathom. He appears amiable enough, and tolerably intelligent, but there is a dull, restless motion in his eyes; withdraw your attention, and he is gazing at you with a dark and subtle meaning."

"You have explained the feelings of Mr. Hartley, but as for me I don't attach so much importance to this *sans pareille* of yours. He is a raw Yankee boy, with a very disagreeable countenance. But, Ormond, there is this thing to be taken into consideration. If

he is now an unimportant individual, he may come in as your heir."

"How do you mean *that*?" answered Colonel Ormond, with a puzzled look.

"Simply this, Ormond. *You are possessed of valuable property; you die; your wife and children are not emancipated. She is a slave; your children are illegitimate. They can not, according to the laws of Louisiana, become your heirs. The property consequently goes to the nearest collateral heir. Who is he? He is here! Will you hesitate longer now?*"

"Good Heavens! doctor, to what an awful precipice you have dragged me; what a horrid picture you have drawn!"

"Only Ormond, that you may avoid the danger, and take warning from the scene I have painted."

"I can hesitate no longer," cried he, with the veins on his forehead swollen, and his eyes flashing brightly.

"I will at once go to the city! I will face degradation and endure shame for the sake of those I love."

"Calm yourself, Ormond! while I live your children have a friend, even if they have no other."

Ormond pressed his hand silently, and with the understanding that a communication would be made to Talbot, they separated.

When they met in the gallery, a cool glass of claret awaited them.

"Mr. Hartley," said Colonel Ormond, "I have a letter for you;" he handed it to him. The seal was broken.

"I fear now, colonel, that my visit can not be prolonged at present," said he to Ormond, at the same time handing him the letter. "I have no longer an excuse for tarrying."

Colonel Ormond returned the letter. An inquiry was now made for Talbot, but he was nowhere to be found. In a short time he came in, saying that he had been taking a stroll over to the sugar-house. But this was false.

About ten minutes previous to the conversation we have noted as occurring in the garden, Talbot walked into it, invited by the beauty of a clump of cape jessamine; he sat down on a seat placed there and fell into a reverie. He had not been there long before he heard the sound of voices in earnest conversation; his first impulse was to escape their observation; but this he could not do without exposing himself to the charge of eaves-dropping; and, thinking perhaps that he might become possessed of some secret, kept his station. Suddenly he felt an electric thrill which seemed to startle every nerve in his body, and made him tremble and gasp for breath. He heard the words distinctly uttered by Dr. Grant. "*You are possessed of valuable property; you die; your wife and children are not emancipated. She is a slave; your children are illegitimate. They can not, according to the laws of Louisiana, become your heirs. The property goes to the nearest collateral heir. Who is he? He is here!*"

These words were heard by him in his place of concealment, and they astounded and confused him. As the poor miner, delving for years in the vast cave, is bewildered and stupified by the glorious light of day when suddenly seen, he was in a like manner taken by surprise at the bright prospect unexpectedly opened before his gaze. A light had been shed on his path, and it seemed that nothing was necessary but to follow it. His dreams would be realized, he would roll in gold, and his ambition, the dream of years, be satisfied.

The one object of his life was now to play for this grand stake ; and to its successful accomplishment, he determined to devote all his powers. He felt that *he might, by a certain combination of circumstances, within his control, be the heir!* The thread of his future life was spun ; he could see the end, bright and glorious.

In the evening, Dr. Grant asked him to walk. During the stroll, he introduced the subject. "Mr. Talbot" said he, "I think it is my duty, to prevent any painful mistake on your part, to state to you the position of the lady of this house ; she is not Colonel Ormond's wife." This Talbot already knew, as he had pumped Pierre in the morning, going to town.

"It is common in this country, and the West Indies, for persons to live together as man and wife when they are not really married and their union has not been blessed by the church ; this is their condition."

"I am much gratified, doctor," said he, in an innocent manner, "that you have explained this matter to me, and feel obliged to you for it."

"It is due to you, Mr. Talbot, as a relative ; you will know how to treat her and the children."

"Oh, as to that, doctor, I shall treat her with all the respect I would, were she his own wife really ; and, the children as relatives."

"By so doing you will please Ormond, and gain his friendship."

It was with pain that Colonel Ormond heard the determination of Mr. Hartley expressed, of going the next morning to the city, and thence returning to the North ; for he had, by his gentle deportment, and urbane manners, won considerably on him, and he used many arguments to induce him to prolong his visit.

He replied by expressing how much enjoyment he

had had, and pledged himself again, if circumstances permitted, to return to the South.

Marie spent this evening in the gallery with the gentlemen, accompanied by the children. The conversation flowed along in a gentle, pleasing manner; each tried to confer pleasure on the others. Even Talbot, for the time, ceased brooding over his projects, and forgot, for a season, the objects of his passion.

Such moments seldom occur, but when they do, they mark a passage in a man's life; they come like the sweet songs of angels; their influence lingers around us like a pleasing dream; and, as life advances, their memory grows sweeter and sweeter. And this recollection clings to us like some dreamy half forgotten strain of music. But these moments never return.

Like the wearied mariner, tossed about by wind and wave in the waste of waters, we find ourselves suddenly becalmed near some sweet placid isle, where the hues of the violet and the tropical green are mingled with the many colored tints of a Southern clime. The wind freshens, and it is passed, the illimitable ocean is around us, but the sweet remembrance of that fair isle, its soft balmy shore, and its tiny wavelets breaking in fairy grottos, clings around us *forever*.

Hartley felt, in separating next morning from his generous hosts, a feeling of sadness; they kindly pressed him to remain, yet he could not; he mounted his horse, and rode away—yet one more look; they stood in a family group in the gallery, gazing after him; the orange boughs waved in the breeze, and seemed to bid him farewell. A sigh escaped from his bosom, mentally he blessed the family altar, he urged on his steed, and was seen no more.

"Mr. Talbot," said Colonel Ormond, one morning,

after breakfast, "you must amuse yourself as you best, can; use no ceremony, be at home, and let not any forms restrict your enjoyment. There are guns, and, you have a horse at your service. You will find plenty of game back of the plantation, and old Pierre, a negro whom you will find about the Quarter, will be your attendant."

He replied in a suitable manner, and the colonel rode out to attend to plantation duties.

CHAPTER X.

"Leave *us* not yet—through rosy skies from far,
But now the song-birds to their nest return;
The quivering image of the first pale star
On the dim lake yet scarce begins to burn;
Leave *us* not yet."

IT was evening; the sun was flinging a flood of golden radiance over all nature; the trees, the water, all caught a tinge of the crimson hue, as the declining orb slowly sunk into his bath of glory. Marie was sitting in the gallery reading; the children were playing in the yard below. Colonel Ormond rode up, and Marie descended the steps to meet him.

"Marie," he exclaimed, taking both her hands in his, and looking into her face; "I have some news for you."

"I can not imagine it."

"Well, then, Louis Lamotte is going to Paris. His guardian has consented at my request to send him, so you see the children will have a companion on their voyage."

"I am delighted at it," replied she, smiling, at the same time placing in his hand a note.

He read it.

"Monsieur le Colonel, and Madame Marie:—I am certain of setting out for Paris, by the tenth of next month. If you will entrust your children to my care, I will treat them as my own, and I will, as well as madame, be proud of your confidence. You will please

write me, and advise of your determination, and when you will be in the city. Accept the regards of your friend :

“JACQUES CIRALLÉ.”

“You give me a Roland for my Oliver,” said he, laughing, “but I suppose it is the best we can do, although it is distressing to separate from them.”

“Oh, Charles ! you feel doubtless ; but what is your grief to a mother’s. You can ride about over the plantation, attend to your duties, see company, hunt, fish, and go to town. I am alone ; I am sad and solitary ; I go from room to room ; I miss the silvery tone of happy voices, the light merry laugh, the tender caress at night, when, like white doves, they fold up their wings for rest ; I miss the murmured prayer ; I turn from room to room with a shudder ; I feel as if they were dead, for no gentle hand presses mine, and says, ‘*Mother !*’ These things I feel.”

“Well, Marie,” replied he, speaking gravely and kindly, “since you take it so much to heart, do not send them away ; keep them and get a governess.”

“No, Charles, I can make this sacrifice for their sake. I am ready to send them.”

“Zoe ! Estelle !” cried he to the children. They sprang toward him, for his voice had never been raised in unkindness to them ; flowers were scattered on the ground, and playthings overturned at that voice.

He caught them up in his arms, they pressed their pure little rosy lips to his, and Zoe gazed at him with her great “dreamy eyes,” wondering why he was so serious. Estelle ran her hands into his locks, and leaned fondly on him.

"Zoe," he said, at length, "are you and Estelle willing to go to school?"

"We would wish to go, papa," said they both.

"Do you know you will have to cross the great sea?"

"Yes," replied Zoe, "but mother says God is going with us, and we will be happy."

Ormond smiled at this naïve remark. "God is every where, my child; and on the ocean, or at home, never forget to thank him for all his kindness."

"We do thank him, papa. Mother makes us ask the good God to bless you, and she prays for you so sweetly."

Ormond placed them down gently; that remark, so simple and unaffected, showing the purity of woman's devotion, touched his heart, and he walked out on the river bank: his breast was full.

That night he sat down and wrote to M. Cirallé, thanking him for his offer, and embracing it. He also sent a note the next morning to M. Le Baron, Louis' guardian, expressing a wish that Louis might be allowed to go over on the same vessel with his children.

Some days passed away, and no change occurred among our characters. Marie, as usual, occupied herself in needlework and in preparing for Zoe's and Estelle's departure, and often in instructing them in their religious duties. She never allowed an opportunity to pass without inculcating upon their minds some holy truth or pious precept, for she was truly religious, although she did not appertain to any church. Bred and educated in the tenets of the Catholic faith, she had in her earlier intercourse with Ormond been startled by the principles of his creed. She had read and conversed with others on doctrinal points, and

although not abjuring the Romish Church entirely, she ceased to be an attendant at the confessional. The general principles of the sect she adhered to and believed in ; hence her reason why a Catholic institution was preferred.

Colonel Ormond divided his time between Dr. Grant and Mr. Herndon, but often took Talbot with him to the neighbors, where he was always introduced as his relative. When not occupied thus, Talbot was hunting or fishing, away back in the recesses of the swamp, with old Pierre for his attendant, who was in his eyes the hero of a hundred tales.

When he was in the company of Marie, he assumed so different a character from his own, that she ceased to regard him with that strange feeling of repugnance and anxiety which he at first inspired. He even became a favorite with the children ; he gathered flowers for them, and wove them into garlands ; he carved pieces of wood into toys and crosses, and made a thousand fantastic forms of them. He would sit for hours with his pencil and colors, and form some brilliant picture with vivid hues, to captivate their senses. He gave Zoe, as the eldest, drawing lessons, under which she soon exhibited a rare and delicate taste ; or he would get them near him, and plait willow baskets for Estelle, and seem to listen with pleasure to her expressions of delight ; and then at other times he would please them by the sound of the flute. But although he thus gained on their esteem, there was one whom he could not conciliate—that was Louis. Do what he would, Louis ever repelled his advances, but in a polite and courteous manner. With Talbot he was grave, thoughtful and reserved ; but with others he was as gay and cheerful as a happy disposition and good

temper could make him. Talbot could not but observe it, and he secretly hated him for it.

Louis could not understand his feelings in regard to this man; he could not analyze his sensations; he only knew that as two opposite elements brought into contact will not unite, so it was with them; he had nothing in common with him; but they could not mingle, and he disliked him instinctively from the first.

Before the family, Talbot's face wore the simple manners of a well-meaning but not profound man; his actions were common-place; his conduct exhibited nothing marked, save a disposition to please; but it was in the solitude of his chamber, when he was hidden from all human eyes, when no one was near to mark his actions, and betray the hidden secrets of his soul: then, standing at the window of his room, did he gaze over the fair fields fruitful with teeming crops; then would the inward workings of his passions come forth; then would he murmur at that Providence which had so liberally endowed another, and put the curse of poverty on himself; then would his form expand, his chest heave, and his eye light up with a fiendish glare, and thoughts as dark as night chase each other through his brain.

Thus remained matters for some weeks, during which time arrangements for the final departure of Zoe and Estelle were consummated. Nothing remained but to allow the period to elapse until the sailing of the ship; every one seemed to be in a bustle, and busy for some time previous. There was a packing and unpacking of boxes, a putting up of summer clothes, and laying out of thicker ones; then a substitution of thin ones again, as a thought of a warm day

at sea suggested itself. There was a making up or the toilet, and a thousand little things done which might have been let alone. Even old Sally forgot to grumble, and walked into the house half a dozen times a day, with an apron full of lavender, rue, or sweet marjorum, "*to pack de childen's close in,*" and which Marie would take to keep from hurting the old thing's feelings, long after every thing was packed and ready to be sent off. Pierre wiped his eyes with the cuff of his jacket, and brought a lot of pecans "*to keep the little misses from bein' hongry on de road.*" Sylvia occupied her time in scolding the other servants, crying until her eyes were as red as a water turtle's, and in packing up.

But all things will have an end, and so did this. The fatal day at length arrived. During this and the preceding one a watch had been kept up on the river bank; and it was not until the evening of the second day, that the cry of the little negroes of, "*De steam-boat coming!*" warned Colonel Ormond, that now indeed the first step was to be taken. Marie wept an abundance of tears, as she took the children in the garden, for the last time; and, under the old oaks, she once more impressed upon their minds the great truths she had tried to implant there, in her many conversations. There, under the deep shade of those old trees, did she, this pure mother, and her young children, hold sweet converse, to serve for perhaps many years—perhaps forever! There in that sweet spot, familiar by a thousand joyful associations; sacred by a mother's holy love; did they cling to each other, and mingle a sacred grief at quitting such a home, it might be, never to return; its joys, and cares, its pleasant hours; its flowers and birds, were to be to them no more.

"Gloom is upon thy lonely hearth,
Oh silent house! once filled with mirth;
Sorrow is in the breezy sound,
Of thy tall poplars whispering round."

And thus it was until Colonel Ormond found them; and they accompanied him to the landing.

The boat was nearing the shore; the white flag waved, and the sonorous tones of her great bell replied; the white wreaths of steam arose; she glided along and turned in to the bank. The baggage was piled up on the wharf, which ran out a few feet into the river. Then came a crowd of negroes, old and young, yellow and black, all surrounding the party, almost suffocating them; and each desirous of bidding a personal farewell to the children. They all were sorry, many cried bitterly, and the whole made a great deal of noise; each one too was emulous of being distinguished by their greater attention. Some brought pecans, some sugar-cane, and some a bunch of violets, even one a young bird. Old Sally had brought a memento.

"Here, Miss Estelle," she exclaimed, "Dis is de last laying of '*old Frizzly*.' I was gwine to set em, but I fotch 'em for you to member old Sally by," and here she forced into her hand the handle of a basket containing about a dozen fresh eggs. Estelle looked up, and burst out laughing, but took them. Poor old thing! in the simplicity of her heart, she thought it a suitable present.

Then came the last parting, and the tears, and shaking of hands, and then it was all over; the planks were drawn on board, the big bell sounded, and they were on the bosom of the muddy Mississippi. The girls were out on the guards waving a last farewell; there they stood, answered by a hundred adieus, and

the waving of many hands ; the voices sounded fainter amid the rush of steam, the crowd grew more indistinct, and at last dwindled down to a confused mass ; a bend in the river shut them out from sight, and all was over. The poor children retired to their state-room to weep.

Talbot had stood by during the parting, and his heart beat too, he scarce knew why. Colonel Ormond requested him to come to New Orleans in a few days after they had left, so as to allow him time to see the children off ; and he would try and procure him a situation in some house in the city.

As had been agreed upon, Louis Lamotte was to accompany them ; and Colonel Ormond therefore requested the captain of the steamer to land at Le Baron's plantation. Accordingly, as she hove in sight, her bell again slowly sounded out the warning. Dr. Grant was standing on the levee, with Louis beside him, and there was the portly form, and good-humored countenance, the grizzled whiskers *à la militaire*, and the broad brimmed hat of Mr. Le Baron. A happy smile of joy lit up the countenance of Louis as he recognized the faces of Zoe and Estelle, who were standing on the guards, with old Sylvia. The steamer rounded to, there was another greeting—another parting, and away plunged the good boat, freighted with many anxious souls.

Dr. Grant remained on board ; he was to accompany them to the city ; and Louis and himself sought the ladies cabin. As soon, however, as the doctor was free, he and Ormond might be seen strolling down toward the bar for a little toddy, a cigar, and a hand in one of the numerous card parties ; this is life on the Mississippi.

It was morning again, radiant and cheerful; the sunlight sparkled on the water, and the pleasant breeze came refreshingly up, wafting on its wings the fragrance of a far-off field of flowers from some bright little isle. New Orleans was in sight! Oh what a variety of faces that announcement aroused; how many anxiously crowded forward to catch a first glimpse of the metropolis of the land of flowers! To our party, it told of an early separation which made Marie's heart bound tumultuously in her bosom. To some it spoke of a meeting with long severed friends. See the uncouth youth with the brass watch-chain, there by the bar, trying to smoke a common cigar. See the lights and shadows on his countenance; but see the smile of conscious security which mingles with all. What does it denote? Why he has come South at the invitation of a friend of his father, to be put as a clerk in his store. He is provided for; let him pass.

Turn your gaze now on that red-headed youth; see his dress; look at the assurance of the cast of his beaver; see that air of *nonchalance* he tries to assume, with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his red waistcoat. He seems to look down on all around him, as he puts the gold head of his cane to his mouth; but, with all his *sang froid*, he is excited.

He is a member of one of the "*first families of Virginia*." A brother left the clay hills of the Old Dominion years ago, to seek his fortune. Time rolled on and fortune smiled; brother after brother came out, and all succeeded; some are merchants, some in banks; but never mind, they are men every inch, and now here is the Joseph of the flock; he has come with all his pride of birth and high family notions, to be made a man of in his turn. But here is another char-

acter; look at that comical phiz—that inimitable grin, and that air of independence; see his dress, made at home, woven and spun by rosy-cheeked and cherry-lipped sisters; look at those metal buttons big enough for saucers; coat, vest and pants, all the same, and that unapproachable *hat*. “Bar-keeper, I guess I’ll take a cigar—how much dew ye ask for ’em? Gosh! I can’t stand *that*! whar I come from yeou can git tew for a cent.” Some day you may find him president of a bank.

But who is *he*—that young handsome fellow with new hat, fine pantaloons and elegant boots? He is lounging in one chair, and his legs thrown carelessly over the back of another; his eyes are half shut, and he indolently smokes, as if it were a labor; see his languid air. He is the son of a cotton-planter, and is going to buy *more niggers* to raise *more* cotton, to buy *more niggers* with. Do you see that person near him, with the shad-bellied coat, white hat, and crape around it, bright buttons, and a profusion of jewelry? He is a human shark, a gambler; he has his eye on the aforesaid young man. A social game will be introduced, and the gold will fly; maybe his indulgent father will not see much of the money for the draft he gave him for the balance of his crop; it will melt away, and go as easy as the half dollar he carelessly throws to the waiter who brushes his pants. Here are many more characters. There is a young doctor, who can scarcely decide whether he will oust the house-surgeon of the Charity Hospital, or settle in the country; and if the latter, he can not decide to what portion to give the benefits of his vast stores of knowledge. There is a young lawyer, a graduate of Cambridge, going to settle somewhere and here is the

dapper clerk from Philadelphia; here the broken-down merchant of Boston, whose paper was once good in Calcutta, or on the Bourse in Paris, or among the brokers of London; he, sad and solitary, is going to seek for some subordinate situation in the city of New Orleans. And here is the adventurer, who is ready for any thing, from being sent as a missionary among the Indians, to going on a slaving voyage.

Here, also, is the jolly old sugar-planter, whose name is good for many a thousand; and by his side the cotton-planter, who numbers his bales far up in the hundreds; both are neatly but plainly dressed; and by them, stands a New York tailor, who, by his airs and habit, seems to be able to buy them both.

Far up in the lady's cabin are others, girls coming South to seek husbands, and there with sharp nose, vinegar aspect, and eyes like a raccoon, sits a young lady of thirty-three; she has come South to act as governess in a gentleman's family.

But we have no further time to individualize, the boat reaches the levee, and is pushing her way among a number of others, lying there from every portion of the country. The mass of human beings on board, tumultuously hurrying, pressing forward, pressing back, carpet-bags, trunks, band-boxes, wig-boxes, all are mingled in confusion; and the crowd below on the wharf, shout and laugh and jest, and try to rush aboard; and the tribe of cabmen and hotel runners, and porters mix; and the crowd above, and the crowd below gaze on each other a moment, each seeking for some familiar face, then advance like the heads of two contending armies, meet, unite and, as some chemical mixture poured into a turbulent pool in a moment becomes calm, lost in each other, swallowed up, no longer

distinguishable, and our characters are also covered up in mist, and absorbed in the toil and turmoil of a great city.

Dr. Grant, who had charge of the outfit of Louis, of course became with him a guest of Colonel Ormond. We will not follow the minutiae of events in their life in New Orleans. Colonel Ormond and Dr. Grant would stroll down town in the morning at nine; return up town at eleven, dine at three, see friends, or devote themselves to the family, or gradually saunter home in the heat of the day; in the evening stroll down to the Place d'Armes, and after a promenade around its ancient walks, and paying a tribute of solemn interest to the old Cathedral, bring themselves up to the steps of the *Café de Ville*; there seated in a quiet corner, with a cup of coffee, for which this place was ever famed, and a fragrant cigar, they would listen with interest to the conversations of the old French and Spanish residents, who always gather around the domino-tables, drink coffee, and talk about "*lang syne*."

I do not know how it is, but I never could approach the old church of St. Louis, and gaze upon its antique towers, its time-stained walls, its old Tuscan groundwork with its quaint foreign style, without offering a sigh to times gone by, with a feeling of reverence and interest. Viewing it from the opposite side of the square in connection with its wings, the public buildings, and letting the imagination wander back to the time when the cavaliers of Spain trod in their pride its aisles, and the yellow flag floated from its towers, or the tri-color of France usurped its place, it recalls the days of Bienville, Carondelet, Vidal, and Casa Calvo. The events, which had passed in the apartments of the

City Hall, and changed the fate of a nation, and the scenes which had taken place on that old square when "the star-spangled banner" arose before the eyes of a delighted people, and proclaimed them free. On treading its ancient aisles, and before its bright altar gazing on those living forms which have rendered the pencil of Raphael immortal, and drinking in those heavenly sounds which float around its heavy arches; all these bewilder and delight. Or, stand over the dust of the proud rulers of this chosen land, and among them good Father Sedella, who for half a century officiated at its altar; the effect is the same, and a dim misty crowd of ghosts of departed events pass and repass before you, and chasten the spirit.

In this spot, so dear to the old citizens, did Ormond and Dr. Grant love to linger, and in this quiet place watch the devotees, as they left the busy, bustling world with all its cares and joys, to render adoration where it is due.

CHAPTER XI.

"None is poor but the mean in mind,
None is wealthy but the affluent in soul."

TUPPER.

"I am determined to prove a villain.

* * * * *

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous."

RICHARD III.

WE left Talbot alone on the plantation; he never met the overseer except in some of his rambles. With Pierre he wandered over the broad domain; he spent whole days upon the lake, or penetrated far into the swamp; and while he thus occupied his time, he brooded over his fancies. He hoped and prayed that some contingency might arise by which he would be "the only surviving relative," and that Colonel Ormond would defer and procrastinate, until too late, the act of justice to Marie. And while he thus allowed his mind to ponder on this theme, he, even he, would shudder as strange phantoms would flit across his brain. So horrible his dreams that he dared not even speculate on this too much.

A night or two after the departure of Colonel Ormond, Talbot was sitting alone; lights were brought in, his eyes were bent on the fire, musing on the events of the past few months; his foul imagination was running riot with his reason. Memory was busy with the "scenes that were," and visions of other days floated

around him—his father's family, his gray-haired mother, his blooming sisters, all, all gone; and he left to struggle on alone with poverty. Ay! that poverty and deep degradation, the pitiless master, and the cold, unsympathizing world; and they too were fled, and the dream was changed.

As we have before said, the family of Talbot were poor, but respectable; his father had died while he was quite young, and the whole support of three sisters and himself devolved upon the mother. She possessed a small house on the outskirts of the city, and with the help of her eldest girl, succeeded in procuring sewing. But even this did not last; death called her away, and then soon followed one of the younger sisters. About this time, a man who was in a small business, and whom the family had worked for, became intimate at the house; the result was, the seduction of the youngest girl and her desertion of the family. A fatal disease soon carried off the eldest one, and Talbot was left alone. Out of compassion, he was taken as an errand-boy by a commercial house, and finding him possessed of a good deal of natural shrewdness and capacity, the senior member of the firm sent him to school. Here he acquired the knowledge he possessed, and being naturally intelligent, he soon outstripped his class-mates. His prospects were ruined by the death of his kind patron, and in a short time the dissolution of the house deprived him of his situation. At the age of fifteen he barely supported himself by any thing which offered; many nights he went supperless to bed, and many others he had no bed at all. From this date, living in destitution, he spent three years among the lowest and vilest of a

great city, and from this period may be dated his ruin.

He secured an humble situation at a pitiful salary, which he held until his long-cherished design of coming South was carried into execution. It was during his association with the low and corrupt that a coloring was given to his future life. He was not by nature gifted with any brilliant qualities of mind, but seemed in a supereminent degree to be possessed of duplicity, and to a casual observer could pass for one deeply learned. From his infancy he had seen the influence and power of wealth; he therefore, when he had arrived at the years of manhood, sought the fellowship of young men whose means were large. Those who were dissolute and profligate soon became his firm friends, and many was the *douceur* he received from them for lending his aid in gratifying their pleasures.

He had long resolved in his own soul, and it had become the fixed and predominant idea in his subtle mind, to one day revel in wealth, to be the master of gold for its own sake, and for the power it gave its possessor over others. This was what turned his steps to the South. Allured by the golden dreams he had formed, and descriptions from others, he had long determined to desert an arid soil and frigid climate, and emigrate to the land of sunshine and gold. With this intention he hoarded every cent, until he had accumulated sufficient to carry him to the Eldorado of his hopes and wishes.

For some years previous to his leaving the North, he had contracted an intimacy with a young man by the name of William Stamps.

This person lived in the same establishment with him, and consequently they were thrown much into

each other's society; a similarity of tastes soon drew the bonds of their intimacy closer, and they became warm friends. The same feelings and habits, which characterized Talbot, exhibited themselves in Stamps, with this exception: Stamps loved money with a devoted and ardent feeling, simply as the means of gratifying his passions, of which wine and women were not the least. He had been well brought up until that age at which boys are sent off to shift for themselves; bad companions had converted him into a depraved reprobate. He had but one virtue, if virtue it can be termed, seeing that it is possessed by many of the inferior animals in an eminent degree: he was constitutionally brave, and, had he lived at a period when courage could have been called forth, he might have become distinguished. He was two years the senior of Talbot; but instead of a low, tortuous policy being pursued, he went straight to the point at once. He was a bold but unscrupulous man; he did not possess that prudent, cautious, self-preserving policy which the other had; his was the subservient mind to Talbot's. He was the one to execute, bold and confident if guided by a superior mind, but mystified and lost if not directed and left to himself. Both combined made a pair to be feared and avoided.

This much premised, we return to Mr. Talbot, whom we left comfortably sitting by the fire. Supper was over, and he was virtuously laying plans to make a fortune, when he suddenly thought of Stamps.

When he parted from him, he had faithfully promised to write, and to pave the way for his advent; this promise now came across his memory; and he arose from his seat. "Confound it!" he exclaimed, "I have neglected poor Stamps very much; I promised to write

often, and here I have been some weeks, and have not thought of him. It will not do to neglect him, for he may be of use to me some of these times, and I must keep him in play. He reached to the mantle and took a cigar, a small vase of which was always ready.

"Well, well," he continued, as he slowly lit it, and watched its glowing point—"well, my friend, we are situated differently now from what we were once; you are plodding on behind the counter, peddling calico and pins; and I—ah—this is a confounded good cigar. Well, well;" and here he sat down again, and relapsed into his musing. His thoughts again ran upon his former life, and his clerkship; the many Sabbath walks they had taken into the suburbs. Many a deep and envious sigh had escaped them, as they eyed the splendid equipages, when they dashed by, in all their glory and pride, of gold, and silver platings, with dashing steeds, proud menials, and voluptuous inmates, rolling along to church. Then would they fall into conversations, in which romantic visions of wealth, and luxury were predominant, until they were beyond the noise of streets, where the nabob moved in all his glory, until they were far up in the green woods: they then would recline on some seat of stone in the public grounds, or on a mossy bank, and dream away the day; then returning, dine at some cheap restaurant, in which the viands were, by the excitement of their imaginations, made to resemble some rare banquet.

Again Talbot rose and paced the room, then suddenly seating himself, drew up the light, opened his portfolio, and penned the following letter, which will exhibit the nature of his musings:

“—— PLANTATION, PARISH of ——, LA.
December 10th, 18—.

“MY DEAR STAMPS:—Upon parting with you in New York, I promised to write on my way, and certainly upon my arrival in this country; but the fact is, I have had my time so much occupied that I have had no leisure.

“Billy, imagine your friend now sitting in a splendidly furnished room by a fire; a first rate cigar (not like them we used to smoke), and plenty of servants to wait upon me, and all this upon a fine sugar plantation.

“I found upon my arrival a relation, who is the owner of it; a fine fellow he is too, and as liberal as he can be. He has got the most beautiful woman you ever saw, and two sweet little girls, and as much money as *would burn up a wet dog*. I spend my time very pleasantly, and the gentlemen around here *are* gentlemen; they are just as different from what we have heard as you can imagine. Nothing like what the Northern people think; they are affable and kind, not proud, as they are up there.

“I shall leave in a few days for New Orleans, which is only a day’s journey, to go into business.

“Billy, this country comes up to the idea of what we formed of it. It is now December; with you the weather is as cold as Charity, while with us the air is as bland as April. The garden and yard are full of flowers and fruit; ay! and the orange-trees are loaded—yes, oranges! regular golden fruit. What do you think of that, Stamps? And then go into the sugar-house, see the number of slaves; see their operations, the machinery, the sugar boiling, and then the net amount of the sugar hogsheads, and the sea of molasses. Ah, Stamps. your mouth waters.

"Well, there is a negro always at my service, to go out hunting with me, and there is also a lake and a boat. What would you give to be able to say, 'Bring out my horse!' and in a few minutes you have him at the door, ready saddled for you to mount, and then you can ride away, and stay as long as you choose; go to the house of a neighbor and dine; be treated like a prince; or go down to town and drink with gentlemen who spend more in cigars and liquor in a year than old Hunks is worth; come back in the evening, have no one to say to you, 'Where have you been, sir?' like we used to do, if we staid a minute over our time in going to our meals, and tremble in our shoes for fear of loosing our place.

"The only thing I lack now is your company, Stamps; and that I must have, sooner or later. I will as soon as I get established, exert myself in procuring you a situation. Colonel Ormond which is the name of my relation, told me to come to New Orleans in a few days after him; I suppose he intends to provide for me. I thought at first that he did not look upon me with a very kind eye, and the lady less so; but I have just '*spread myself*,' and tried to please, and now I see a great deal better feeling. At first, she seemed to be as afraid of me as if I were a bear, but now she sits and laughs, while I sketch faces for the children.

"Time, with corresponding action on my part, will banish every thing but want of confidence.

"The colonel thinks it his duty to do all he can for his relative; and I can not resist the sweet temptation of letting him do as he pleases; the more so as I can do nothing for myself.

"They have now gone to New Orleans, to send the two little girls, 'Zoe and Estelle' to Paris to school;

and, by the way, speaking of them, they are of that beauty which you benighted Northerners little dream of; pure Italian like, with the olive and rose struggling for the mastery in their cheeks; while their eyes are large, soft, and expressive; forms like sylphs. Ah, my boy! your mouth streams water—they are the mere inception of the beautiful. If the bud is thus, oh, what will the flower be! This '*honey-bell* and *night-star*' would captivate your senses.

"I find the people here all tinged with a religious feeling; but it seems as if they were unconscious of it. Take, for example, to exhibit the difference, a Northern man, sent to Sunday school from the time he is nine days old, church three times a day, and once during the week—class meetings and Bible societies, crammed to repletion with religious tracts, send him South, and they are the very men who set morality at naught, hunt, fish, go to town on Sunday, and do every thing which is condemned by the Christian world; while you find the Southern gentleman, raised in luxury from infancy, is the one who seems to have an intuitive veneration for the Sabbath, and for all things holy. I have learned this much from observation. I suppose, however, it is the way we at the North are raised; we become surfeited with religion at home.

"But, heigho! here I am giving a moral discourse, and am drawing this letter out too long. I merely designed to say that I found this land of the South to be equal to what I imagined it.

"Write very soon—I will reply—and if I get into a situation, I will not wait to receive yours.

"Adieu, Billy, and believe me as ever,

"Your friend,

"TALBOT."

"Well," he exclaimed, as he threw down the pen, and gave a deep sigh, "that's over, and I call that a non-committal. It is not in my style, but he will attribute that to my coming South, and the change in my situation." And here he threw himself back, and again indulged in visions.

CHAPTER XII.

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."—PSALM ciii. 23, 24.

IT was another mild and lovely day, as the whole family of Colonel Ormond set out to visit the ship which was to be the home of Zoe and Estelle for so many weeks. She was called "Jeanne d'Arc," and had been selected by Mr. Civallé, as combining more of the comforts and elegancies he loved than any other. She was a light, clipper ship, fitted up in magnificent style. Along the street, amid boxes and barrels, bales and chests, tierces and casks, to the levee—amid drays and carriages, fruit-merchants, and Jew-peddlers—steamboat hands and sailors—our party went wondering, and taking note of all, curious and unusual. They were joined by Mr. Civallé and his lady, a pleasant affable little Frenchwoman, with a black eye and handsome teeth. There, with a thousand gay flags fluttering in the breeze; with their taut-drawn rigging, and their yards cock-bill; their tall tapering spars, and loosened sails; the noise of the crowd on the levee around; the orders of the mates, and the merry song of the seamen; there lay, side by side, vessels of many nations. The levee was strung with goods of every clime; and every language was echoed in the ears of the passer-by, as he trod the wharves of the Queen City of the South West. The roll of vehicles

—the shouts and laughs of the crowd—the chattering of the market-people—the orders of the stevedore, as he directed the labor of his men—the inquiries and replies, in foreign tongues, of clerks discharging cargoes—the shrill piping of the Frenchman—the soft and melodious Italian—the jawbreakers of the crowd of Dutch from some emigrant-ship, with their little caps, short jackets, long pipes, and metal buttons, as they came along in a drove, men, women, and children—all, all formed a strange and novel concourse of sights and sounds to more than one of the party.

At last they gained the pier, and were met by the captain of the ship. He was an old friend of M. Civalle's, and a handsome, well-informed gentleman. The "*Jeanne d'Arc*" was a new vessel, built in a superior manner, and bound for Havre.

They were showed into the cabin; the saloons, state-rooms, bath-house, all were seen, and received a share of their attention and praise.

Colonel Ormond inscribed the names of the *voyageurs* on the register.

They at length expressed themselves satisfied, and departed.

The day was fixed for the sailing of the vessel, and now all things were held in readiness for that event. Marie cried, and declared she could not consent for the girls to leave her; and then turned and scolded Ormond, because he agreed that it should be deferred. But at length yielding to a stern necessity, she made up her mind, and nerved herself up to the last sorrowful sacrifice.

CHAPTER XIII.

"My child, my child, thou leavest me! I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance; I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amid the flowers around;
And thy soft breathing hymn at twilight's close,
And thy 'Good-night' at parting for repose."

MADELINE.

THE eventful day at length arrived, and opened on Marie with an anxious and sorrowful heart. M. Civallé arrived soon after breakfast in a carriage, and requested them to be on board at ten o'clock. The baggage was packed, and in the hall—every thing was confusion. Colonel Ormond could not read his morning paper; his cigar was neglected. He arose, and sat down again; he paced the hall, looked at his watch, and then seated himself. Marie was at his side, asking a thousand questions, and attending to all those little wants for the children which only a mother knows how to care for.

Dr. Grant was often coming into the breakfast-room, vowing that something would be forgotten; while Louis was constantly bringing in an accession of articles, which he declared would be needed for the voyage.

Old Sylvia hopped about, trying to arrange matters, all the time making them worse, and creating more disorder; when the car came lumbering up for the baggage.

Breakfast was earlier than usual, and dispatched in silence; for heavy and sad, were the hearts which that morning were clustered around the board.

Marie retired to her own room with the girls; and there, with one on each side, did she kneel down, and pour forth her full soul to God. Earnestly she besought him to extend over her unprotected lambs his mighty arm.

Oh! who can feel as a mother feels? Whose heart, pure and devoted, is so forgetful of self as a mother's? Her thoughts, her ideas, her actions, are all for her offspring.

Marie knelt, and, in agony of soul, asked the blessing of God. Softly she called upon all the holy saints and angels to watch and protect, and, in the hour of danger, to be nigh them. Ere she arose, she heard Colonel Ormond below, asking for her. She added a few more words of advice.

"Zoe," she said, "you are the elder: remember, now, that you are, though young, to supply my place to Estelle in many things. Attend to her wants; and do not annoy Madame Civallé. Be kind to each other. You are going many weary miles from your mother; do not forget her; and remember, children, your Father in heaven! Every night, either in calm or storm, remember, never to lay your heads down on your pillow, until you have asked His blessing. He will watch over you, and make you good and happy, my children." Much more to the same effect did she say. If the reader happen to be a mother, she will understand the feelings of Marie, upon thus surrendering her jewels. She will appreciate all the feelings of a mother's heart and a mother's sorrow.

The sound of wheels at the door informed them

that the moment had arrived. Marie now entered the parlor with Zoe and Estelle, all ready for traveling; and Colonel Ormond came in at another door. Dr. Grant was sitting on the sofa with Louis, in a sorrowful mood, for he had no children of his own, and he felt all the tender and sincere feeling of a parent for these. Old Sylvia was behind the door, crying as if her heart would break. Colonel Ormond happened to look at her, and she appeared so earnest in her lamentations that he could not refrain from smiling.

"Sylvia," he said, "I have an idea of sending you off with the children. What do you think of it?"

Sylvia nervously stepped out from behind the door, and after wiping her eyes many times, placed her arms akimbo, and replied, "Master, I knows very well that I ain't nothin' but a nigger, and it can't be 'spected that I will tell the truth; but I tell you what I thinks of it. I thinks that it is a burnin' shame for you and Miss Marie, to go to sendin' them poor children away from home. I wish that Paris was sunk to de bottom of de Massasip. De Lord knows, when I look at dem poor little tremblin' things, what I has nursed for years in these old skinny arms, and think that they has to be sent off among strangers—I had just as lief die!" and here the faithful creature burst into tears, and flung herself out of the room.

"There is a good deal of feeling and little policy in Sylvia," said Dr. Grant, laughing to hide a tear.

Colonel Ormond compressed his lips, but said nothing. Marie was at that moment about to close a small trunk which had not been carried in the cart; it contained all the fine laces and light wearing apparel, and *bijouterie* of the children. Ormond arose. "Hold Marie!" he said, and, going to the mantel, where laid

a pair of scissors, he seized them and severed a large lock of hair from his head, threw it into the trunk, saying in a touching tone, "My children, remember your father, and if it should please God for us never to meet again, let this lock of hair remind you of his last wishes. Remember your virtue, your honor, and your God!"

He turned off and left the room.

The entrance of Louis informed them that the moment had arrived in reality, and Colonel Ormond returning, Marie arose, hastily donned her bonnet, and pulled her vail down over her face. Sylvia and a Creole servant-girl named Martha assisted the children to arrange their bonnets and shawls, and, as Dr. Grant left the room, Colonel Ormond silently offered his arm to Marie.

They entered the carriage, and were rolled down to the levee. The captain was standing at the gangway, and by his side the good-humored countenance of M. Civallé showed itself, asking and replying to questions all in the same breath, and making all the usual gestures which a Frenchman alone is capable of. When our party entered the cabin, there were several ladies and gentlemen present who were passengers; with these they speedily formed an acquaintance, and, after the usual formalities had been complied with, in regard to stowing of baggage and selecting berths, they all went on deck.

The ship had been hauled out from the pier, and was only held by a single line. It had been arranged that Colonel Ormond, Marie, and Dr. Grant should accompany them down to the Balize, and return in a tow-boat. The passengers were on the quarter and poop-deck, watching the sailors as they cleared the

decks of dunnage, stowing provisions, reefing the running rigging, and bending on new sails.

Painters were at work, touching up stains and bruises, and boys polishing the brass capstan head, binnacle, and stanchions at the hatch and gangway. The mates were busy in seeing every thing snug; stewards in a hurry, getting in their wines, and preparing for their guests; and a peep into their well-arranged pantries, at the rows of bottles of wines, sauces and confections, promised well for creature comforts during the voyage.

M. Civallé had a number of suspicious-looking little bottles to stow away, while his wife, a pretty little animated brunette of some twenty-five years, remained behind on the poop-deck, which I shall take the liberty, for the benefit of the non-professional, to explain to be that portion of the deck which is abaft the mizen-mast or after-portion of the ship, and forms the roof of the cabin, raised above the other portion of the deck.

Marie sat apart with her children, and conversed with them in a low and earnest manner.

It was past noon when the tow-boat "Lion" came alongside; she had in tow a Liverpool ship; she stopped, the "Jeanne d'Arc" was dropped down on her larboard quarter, the line which held her to the levee was loosened, and she had in another moment cast off all ties which held her to America. The voyage was begun, she was passing down to her ocean home, whose white-crested waves and tossing winds longed to embrace her. Night came, and with it millions of stars reflected in the glassy bosom of the river. The passengers were all gathered in groups on the deck, over which there had been an awning rigged, to protect them from the night air; some were sitting soli

tary and alone, with heaving breast and a watery eye, thinking on home and friends left behind ; some were conversing in a joyous tone, and others were silent, but the dark wing of melancholy hung over them as they sat and gazed into the deep water over which they were gliding. The croaking of myriads of frogs, the solemn and wild cry of the bittern from its home in the swamp, and the low flat shores and long grass lent a peculiar character to the scene.

Colonel Ormond sat alone with Marie, conversing with the children, and Dr. Grant and M. Civallé were discussing with great earnestness the most delicate points in French cookery.

There seemed to be a tacit understanding among the passengers not to retire until their arrival at the mouth of the river. The air, although it was late in the season, was soft and balmy, and a gentle breeze slightly waved the long grass on shore ; and there they sat, all enjoying themselves, and waiting to get a sight of the great ocean.

It was broad daylight when the long, low, flat shore terminated, and beyond lay, in illimitable expanse, the great ocean. The town was passed, and it was not long ere the waters of the Mississippi mingled with the clear blue of the Gulf. Here the anchor was let go, and the "Lion" stretched out to sea, to look for an inbound vessel. A pilot came on board, and took command of the ship, which gradually worked her way over the bar, and came into deep water. Colonel Ormond and Marie remained on the ship, and until a long black line of smoke was seen on the horizon they spent the fleeting moments with their children.

The tow-boat, as agreed upon in the morning, gradually neared and slackened her steam. Then Marie's

breath came thick; and a thousand feelings resolved themselves into a single moment of time; the last parting had come. She nerved herself up to a final effort; and as the word was given, "All aboard!" she clasped her children—deep and passionate was the embrace—powerful the storm of sorrow which was pent-up in her bosom. The captain seized his trumpet; the mates echoed his orders; and crowding aft, the men rushed with the capstan bars; the messenger and swifter were already around it; the word was given, and away they flew; the anchor was catted; the men ran aloft; the sails were loosened, and Marie was carried on board the steamer half-fainting; while the gallant ship, as she felt the breeze, leaned over to the impetus, and commenced her voyage over the blue waters. Reader—perhaps you are a parent—it may be that you have hung over the sick couch of a dear cherub, and gazed with anxious heart at its sunken cheeks. You have felt the life-blood leaping like lightning in its frail frame; and marked the hectic flush—the glistening eye—and felt the hot breath as it issued from that little fever-parched mouth; and you hush your breath, and place your cheek close to the little sufferer; while the flesh shrinks in horror, and the soul is sick with agony lest it be dead!—when it murmurs in its delirium, "Mother!"—when the cricket's chirp, or the rustling of the leaf against the window pane, makes you start, you scarce know why; and when its weak and helpless eyes beseech you for the assistance you "know you can not give." You who have felt this, who have known a parent's agony, the concentrated bitterness of that moment, can feel for Marie. She turned and looked toward the ship. A cloud of canvas was piled upon her yards.

The steamer was rushing over the water, and the distance gradually increasing between them. Upon the deck they stood; while hands waved handkerchiefs, and fond lips sent kisses on the air; but Marie saw nothing, the tears dimmed her vision; and when the party became indistinct, her head fell on the bosom of Colonel Ormond, and she wept deeply and passionately! He sat there, gazing on the now fast receding vessel. A gloom was on his brow, and a sorrow on his heart.

"Go, in thy glory, o'er the ancient sea,
Take with thee, gentle winds, thy sails to swell;
Sunshine and joy upon thy streamers be,
Fare thee well, bark, farewell!"

When they arrived in New Orleans, they found Talbot; he had come down according to the request of Colonel Ormond, who was to procure him a situation in some mercantile house; which promise he performed in the morning.

Marie retired early, and spent the night in tears. Ah! and those tears! bitter, deep, despairing, such as sear the eye-balls and melt the heart with agony. Upon their arrival in the city, Colonel Ormond and the doctor walked up town. In passing a hotel, they were cheered by the sound of a well-known voice; and Mr. Herndon stood before them. "Ah, Ormond, too late!" he said. "I learned that you have parted from your children. I rode over to your place, and thinking to find you ready to start, found you gone; but in your place, your relative. I came down with him as I had business, hoping I would get a sight of you all before you left."

"I am sorry you were disappointed, Herndon; they would have been pleased."

"How does Marie take it?"

"Badly, badly; but grief wears off, come; Grant and myself strolled up here; we are just going to return."

The three proceeded again down town; indulging as they went in that pleasant chat common to near and dear friends.

Talbot had retired, Dr. Grant and Mr. Herndon had been sitting out on the door-step smoking (Ormond having stolen up stairs to cheer Marie), and the subject of their conversation was upon the situation of their friend and Marie; and their determination was to urge with all their power his immediate and prompt action in the matter, and have it consummated at once. Colonel Ormond came down and joined them.

"Ormond, I am going to return to-morrow, and when I meet you again, I wish you to say, 'Herndon, I have relieved myself from an odium, and done what my friends advised.'"

"My dear friend," replied Ormond; "I feel grateful for your sincere disinterestedness, and appreciate your friendship. I have already to-day called on a legal friend, and made an appointment for ten to-morrow, when I will at once take preliminary steps to have this long-deferred matter closed."

"This is as it should be, Ormond," he answered, rising; "and no man can feel more gratified to see you disenthral yourself from this procrastination."

"There are certain preliminary steps to be taken," said Dr. Grant, "which subjects it to delay."

"What are they?"

"I am informed that a notice has to be published forty days; and then a petition is presented to the Parish Judge; and if the person to be emancipated is

not above the age of thirty, it has to go before the Police Jury first."

"Yes, I have read the same in the Civil Code; but it is mortifying to be subjected to this humiliation."

"Yet, Ormond, can you with honor retract? Remember the great interests at stake."

"True; yet the notoriety, the shame to have my domestic affairs dragged before a low crowd."

"This sensitive feeling is natural. Yet, Ormond, if it is not done, there is a something which will surely follow."

"It appears to me, that I would rather risk this something after my death, than to debase those whom only I live for."

"You are placed in a very unhappy situation, and I see but one way to escape from it," said the doctor; "and that is not to regard the opinion of the world, and go to work at once."

"Yes; and to-morrow I will do so. I will brave the opinion of the public, and place my children, and the mother of my children, in a position of security and independence."

"Spoken like a man!" exclaimed Herndon; "and now, let's to bed and sleep upon it."

At ten o'clock the next day, Colonel Ormond sought the office of his attorney. He was one of those pure, honorable men who are above the chicanery of the law, and scorn to adopt mean, debasing positions to secure a client, and which are, I am sorry to say, so common among the members of the profession. He listened attentively to Ormond, and felt deeply for his situation, for he had known him well a number of years. At length Ormond stammered through his painful recital.

"Well, Colonel, I do not see that the case is so difficult. I have thought of a method by which all the disagreeable publicity of the affair may be avoided."

"Then, for God's sake, sir," exclaimed Ormond, "let me know it. I will embrace *any* thing."

"You are aware that the thing can not be carried out in this State."

"Is it possible? Why? How?"

"Simply because there is a law which in effect prohibits the manumission of persons, unless they are natives of the State."

"Then, what am I to do?"

"Nothing is easier than to go to another State, where there is no prohibition."

Ormond knit his brows, and sat in silent thought for some time; at length he arose, and observed. "Mr. Bland, I have an idea; I will see you again," and shook his hand. At the door of his dwelling, he met Dr. Grant; he motioned to him to walk with him, and detailed the whole conversation.

"Now, then," exclaimed the Doctor, his eyes sparkling with pleasure, "I have it."

"Proceed!"

"You know that the health of my wife has been bad for some time; that symptoms of pulmonary disease are evident, and that I have been meditating a trip to Cuba, or some more genial climate?"

"Yes, but what connection—"

"Stay!—I am willing to take that trip now; I am willing to go with you to some one of the West Indies, where my wife's health will be restored; and you can accomplish your object at once."

"Doctor!" warmly exclaimed Ormond, "I know

and appreciate your feelings and friendship, but this is more than I could ask."

"Oh, nonsense, Ormond! do you not see that I will be delighted with the trip? suppose the health of my wife is benefited, could I ask more happiness? No, go and see Herndon, for though he is a devil when excited, his judgment is cool and opinion sound."

"I shall be but too happy then to take you at your word."

"Then, see Marie! cheer her heart, and let us get ready." Ormond took him by the hand and pressed it warmly, while the tremulousness of his voice as he thanked him, told him how deeply he felt.

They turned and walked back. Ormond's step was light and buoyant, and freer from care than it had been for many a day, for he now saw a way by which he could perform a duty long delayed, and render himself happy.

Early in the morning, Colonel Ormond had a long and private conversation with Mr. Bland, his attorney, and had declined saying any thing to Marie on the subject, until he returned. He found her in the parlor where she had been awaiting his return. She was dressed in black, a color which becomes all persons of her complexion, and she with her splendid figure, showed to peculiar advantage. Her long dark hair was braided across her spotless forehead, while her cheeks had a slight ripe tinge of carnation, such as the peach obtains by exposure to the sun's rays.

He thought he had never seen her look more beautiful as he drew her to his bosom.

"Marie, my love," he said, "I have seldom ever felt in better heart than this morning. Do you know that I have at length found a solution to this terrible

problem which has so often formed the subject of conversation between us?"

"Do you mean the matter in regard to myself and our — our children?" and here her voice faltered, as she gazed up to him inquiringly, and the tears started to her eyes at the mention of those dear ones, who were now far away among strangers, upon the blue waters of the Atlantic.

"Ay, Marie! it is that; I think it is now set at rest."

"In what manner, Ormond?"

"Why, by a suggestion of Mr. Bland's, which has marked out a course for me to pursue."

"What is it? Mr. Bland is a good man, and I am sure his advice must be so."

"Simply to leave the State to have the act of emancipation passed; as there are many disagreeable things connected with the proceeding here, which will not be necessary in another place. Yet stay! listen! he advises me to go to one of the West India islands."

"The West Indies?"

"Yes! and as soon as I mentioned it, Dr. Grant nobly offered to accompany us, and as his wife is in delicate health, to make her your companion."

"Oh, this is too good, too kind!" she fervently said, while a holy expression of gratitude overspread her features.

After some further conversation upon the subject, she remarked:

"Ormond, I have often thought of the days of my childhood, and a desire has lurked in my bosom to revisit those spots where I was so happy, and yet so miserable. Could this matter be arranged in Martinique? Oh! I see now those tall hills and waving

cocoa-trees, the bright sun, and the gorgeous flowers, of my native isle; and methinks if I visit it under such auspices as the present, every thing will be more bright, and more beautiful than even in my childhood's dream."

"Yes, yes, my own one," he said, as he looked upon her with rapture, "yes, we will go to Martinique; it is a fitting place for this ceremony, and there I can, and will claim you as an honored wife, before the world."

"Bless you, Charles! bless you for this! for so readily yielding to this whim of mine, and for it know that I love you, oh, so dearly!" And she hid her face in his bosom.

"You deserve it Marie," cried Ormond, returning her caresses, "it is the most prudent and most pleasant course." The opening of the hall-door now interrupted the conversation, and they were speedily engaged with Dr. Grant, to whom they communicated the idea. He was delighted with it, and thus passed the time till dinner.

"Mr. Talbot," said Colonel Ormond, at dinner, "we do not intend returning to the plantation to remain, for a few weeks; the health of the doctor's wife is failing, and he wishes us to accompany him on a short trip, thinking it may restore her; and as your engagement has not commenced in the city, I will have to engage you myself. What do you say to it?"

"Ah, colonel," he answered, with a smirk, "you are jesting with me, you well know that if my poor services can avail you any thing, you are heartily welcome to them."

"But I am serious, Mr. Talbot; I have a great deal of correspondence which requires my attention; now,

what I propose is, for you until our return, to act as my private secretary."

"With pleasure, colonel, I will."

"Your services shall not go unrewarded, Mr. Talbot. I have sugar to ship, and that will also be your business."

"Any thing, sir, I will attend to."

"Well, then, that is settled, and you had best return with us."

After dinner he approached Talbot. "Well, Mr. Talbot, as our engagement now commences, and money may not be over plenty, here is a check for a small sum which you may find of use during my absence;" and here he held out a paper. Talbot drew back, pretending great delicacy.

"Tut, tut, man, take it; as the world goes we must be supplied with the current coin; none of this modesty—take it." Talbot, apparently with great reluctance, accepted it, after offering many thanks; but as the reader knows, money was his god, his heart beat fast, and his breath grew thick at the offering.

It was a happy party that evening, which assembled around the fireside of Colonel Ormond. Marie and Dr. Grant sat down to a game of chess; while Mr. Herndon, who had not left the city, and Colonel Ormond, assisted by Talbot, enjoyed cigars and conversation.

The next evening saw them all on a steamer, wending their way homeward

CHAPTER XIV.

"The sky was piled with golden clouds,
The winds were all asleep;
There was no noise, save only this,
The breathing of the deep."

COLONEL ORMOND now set to work to arrange his matters, preparatory to his departure. Mr. Herndon promised to often ride over and direct the overseer, if the return should be delayed, and Talbot was to attend to the correspondence; but not a word did they breathe to him of the place of their destination, or of its object.

A high-churchman in the city had promised to procure letters to the *Prefet Apostolique*, or head of the Church in the island.

When all these little matters had been attended to, he sat down calmly to await the pleasure of Marie and Mrs. Grant, who, as all ladies have, had many little notions of their own to arrange, which men do not know any thing about. They had often met before, but now they saw much of each other; and many a trip to town was made by old Pierre, who returned with packages of finery for them.

Mrs. Caroline Grant had ever esteemed Marie, but the questionable manner in which she lived, prevented her from bestowing too much attention upon her; now she had really formed an affection for her, and, under

existing circumstances, threw off all reserve, and became her constant friend.

At length they signified to Colonel Ormond, that if he pleased, he was at liberty to select a vessel for the voyage. This he promptly did, by writing to his merchants, begging them to inform him of any West India vessels on the point of sailing.

Not many days after this, Colonel Ormond and Marie, with Dr. Grant and his wife, were standing on the river-bank, and a steamer was gradually nearing the shore. Mr. Herndon and Talbot were their companions, with the overseer. A feeling adieu was passed between the voyageurs and Mr. Herndon. Talbot came forward. Colonel Ormond placed in his hand another check, saying, "Mr. Talbot, take this, I may be absent longer than I anticipate, and you may need it."

He drew back.

"Nay, nay, sir, consider it as a mere advance on your wages; take it!"

He hesitated, but, as Ormond thrust it in his hand, received it with becoming modesty. Talbot really almost felt grateful to his generous benefactor, and it would have seemed to an observer, that his heart was touched, as his eyes looked watery; but this was delight. At any rate, he was a little warmed; and, as Marie came up, and gave him her hand, he actually squeezed out a small tear; but it cost him an effort.

A week passed away, and our party stepped on board a beautiful brig, called the "Diadem," bound for Porto Rico. There was no vessel going direct to Martinique.

As they passed along the river, and gazed at the princely plantations on the bank, Marie thought of

the last time she had passed them, of the difference in her situation and her feelings. And then Ormond was so gay, and the Doctor so amusing, and her friend Caroline so delightful, so kind and attentive. She felt a freedom, her bosom was light with joy ; she felt a happiness she had seldom ever felt before, and a gladness of heart, which was foreign to any thing sad or mournful. She was on an errand of happiness, would soon approach these shores an honored and a happy wife, with the black stain of slavery removed from her soul. They reached the Balize, and at length entered on the broad waste of waters. The vessel they had chosen was a new one, and her accommodations were excellent. She was about two hundred tons burden. The deck was not flush, like many vessels of her class, but raised into a cabin like a ship. A network of rope, with iron stanchions, surrounded the poop-deck, where several sky-lights served for seats ; and when the wind was aft, or quartering, it afforded a fine place for passengers to lounge. There were some eight or ten other passengers. Among them was a timid, fat old gentleman, from Boston, going to the West Indies on a speculation ; a grave old Don, who resided in Matanzas ; and three young ladies, who had been to school in Kentucky, and, under the protection of the Don, were going home. There were also two old women, who were piously inclined, who rolled up their eyes, and quoted Scripture frequently ; they were going out as missionaries somewhere to the Cannibal Islands. These, and a young and agreeable Creole gentleman, formed the party. All seemed desirous that their short connection should be as pleasant as possible ; and each one appeared to be doing something agreeable.

Even Dr. Grant forgot to terrify the timid old merchant and the old women with stories about pirates and cut-throats, raw-head and bloody bones, walking the plank, and such like concatenation of horrors, at which the captain would smile, then look grave, and give his assent.

The captain was a jolly old fellow, strict in his discipline, and attentive to his duty. He was agreeable to his passengers, and exercised a fatherly privilege with his younger guests. He was well-stocked with tales of the sea, and often kept a crowd half a night breathless, listening to his yarns of adventure among the islands. But it was in a clear and cloudless night, when the bright stars were seen imaged out in the transparent sea, like golden drops, glowing and burning in their bed of blue and silver—then it was, with a quarter breeze, and the vessel gliding without much motion over the water—then it was, we say, that the captain would uncoil the strands of his memory, overhaul his log, and sit for hours puffing his cheroot, making his hearers gather nearer to each other, and the more timid look over their shoulders. He had been taken by pirates, carried to a lonely island, and, after seeing half his companions murdered, escaped in company with two others, in an open boat, and had been picked up five days afterward, by a vessel bound to Bordeaux. He had cruised among the islands before the introduction of steam, and at a time when piracy was rife; and had many a brush with them on the main land.

It was such a night as we have described, with the exception that a few light fleecy clouds floated about, soft and downy; or sailed along slowly, and gradually melted into each other; or extended into thin wavy

lines, which at length dissolved themselves into a mellow, misty, silver haze, like the harmonious blending of two pure and similar minds.

The captain was the center of a group, the mainsail hung over the quarter, and the passengers were lounging in different attitudes; some occupied the skylights, while other leaned against the network of rope. The boom being over the water, left a clear space for the listeners, who were clustered around the captain.

The passengers had become well acquainted, and mutually pleased.

Ormond and Dr. Grant had been amused from time to time at the eagerness with which the party seemed to listen to any thing which savored of the marvelous and terrible; even Mrs. Grant and Marie had caught the infection, and sat hand in hand, listening in breathless attention.

"Now, captain," observed one of the young ladies, "come, tell us a good story; you know you promised us at dinner that you would, if I would tell how many lovers I had."

"Yes, yes, my child, so I did," replied he.

"Well, now, captain, tell us a real pirate story," chimed in another.

"Very well; what shall it be, young ladies?"

"Oh! a real pirate story; a real Blackbeard story."

"Very good," he replied, lighting another cigar, while he threw the old stump to leeward.

"A pirate story! Did I ever tell you how I was kept in prison by the Chinese pirates, and fed on pickled bull puppies, until every time I tried to talk I barked? Oh! no, no. Well, young ladies, I will tell you a little truth to-night."

"Oh! that's it, captain, give us a good one"

"It was many years ago (I was younger than I am now, and there were no frosty hairs among my locks) that I was second mate on a fine new brig which sailed from New York with a cargo of merchandise for the Guiana market; she was called the 'Sea Foam.' Oh! but she was a beauty! and could make the sea-foam fly higher than any thing on the water. She was a jewel, and could make a nine-knot breeze out of a six, with nothing but her jibs and topsails. Every one who saw her loved her. We had been out a few weeks, had cleared the Gulf Stream, run down the Caribbees, and were heading toward our port, when we had a storm which lasted a week. It was latitude 15 deg. north. We ran under double-reefed topsails all the time, and kept double watch, with lanterns at our peak every night. At last the storm died away, and it sunk into a dead calm. We had nothing to do then but get coral and fish, and we could do that easily enough, as we only had five fathoms of water, and could see every thing clearly at the bottom. Well, our captain (and he was a most terrible hand to swear) he cursed the breeze which would come up in the evening, ruffle the water, and die away; he cursed the storm, and the water, and every thing not over six inches high; but as strange as it may seem, it did not do a bit of good, for the calm continued. We had a number of passengers on board; among them was a noble-looking Spanish gentleman and his two daughters; bright and lovely creatures they were too, and the favorites of the whole crew, who every time they came on deck would touch their hats to them and bless them for their words of kindness to the poor sailors. There were also several English merchants, who were going home; and there was a big fat fellow

several ugly women, and a sprinkling of Yankees. But the chief of the passengers was a young man of dark features, and very handsome; he was about thirty years old, not very tall, but the most elegant man that I ever saw, and of a most distinguished air. His form was superb, built for strength and activity, yet full of grace. His mustache gave a kind of fierceness to his countenance, but when he smiled he exposed a set of the most brilliant teeth I ever saw. Still it was not an unpleasant smile; it at once attracted and repelled you, like the charm of the fabled snake, and it gave his countenance a wild and singular expression. He always wore a suit of undress uniform, but no metal button could be seen at all. When he first came on board he was very reserved, and seemed perfectly indifferent to all the other passengers; but, as we advanced into a lower latitude, he seemed to wake up. At first, he always took the starboard side of the quarter-deck, and, ever keeping a cigar in his mouth, would fold his arms and walk for hours; even at night he never slept as the others did, but by and by he would start up, and, seizing the spy-glass, gaze with it all around the horizon.

"Some of the men said he was afraid, and was looking for pirates; but one or two shook their heads and said nothing but that 'He don't look like a man that is afraid of any thing.'

"The captain used to joke him often, and ask him if he was looking for pirates, or his consort; for there were many pirates in the Caribbean Sea in those days, even coming in sight of cruisers and then getting away. The young man would smile, show his teeth, and say, 'Captain, before we part we may meet one, and then we will see who is most afraid, you or I.'

“When a storm came on, and when the waves burst on our sides, and the vessel was in danger of broaching to, the captain, as it were, paralyzed by fear, the young man seized the trumpet, and holding on by an after-shroud, thundered out in real seamanlike terms his orders, which electrified the whole crew, who flew to execute them. When this man stood there, trumpet in hand, bare-headed, with the wind howling through the rigging, the vessel careening to the blast, the green waves bursting over her, and every thing on the verge of ruin, then it was that, taking the command of the vessel unasked, while the men had deserted their posts, and the passengers were crouching with fear, that he looked, with his hair streaming out on the wind, the ‘Spirit of the Storm;’ then it was, I say, that we saw he was no lubber, no common man. And when the storm was over, and the gentle breeze again wafted us pleasantly on our voyage, he sunk back into the retiring man as before. But after this, he began to mingle more with the passengers, and ultimately was the constant attendant of the two young ladies. But he seemed to have a natural antipathy to the English merchants, and, notwithstanding they tried every means to conciliate him, and offered to drink wine with him at table, he always refused, but in a pleasant, gentlemanly manner, which could not offend them. But they could make no kind of impression on him. The captain, too, I do believe, thought he was the devil, and was very careful not to joke him any more.

“About this time, there was considerable trouble in the British islands; the Registration Act had passed which was to deprive the planters of their slaves, and convert their happy homes into a ruin. The colonists

could say nothing; they were outraged, and many were even trying to take their slaves away to the Spanish islands, where slavery existed; many were interrupted and caught in the act, and all the islands were in a state of tumult, and confusion. People were leaving a ruined country; and many poor planters we carried over to the United States, with curses in their mouths at this mistaken act of England, in converting one of the most beautiful countries in the world into a desert.

"In a few days the wind freshened, and every thing was once more favorable; we were beginning to think of the end of our voyage, when one morning De Montreville, as he called himself, came on deck. He had in his mouth that everlasting cigar. As usual, he took the spy-glass, and laying it on the bulwark, took a long and steady gaze. His countenance brightened up; he gave a sudden start, and again looked for some time. The captain came up at that moment, 'Well, captain,' he quietly remarked, 'there is a sail; take the glass, and see what you make of her.' Here that peculiar, but not unpleasant smile gathered around his lips. The captain took the glass, and after a long and steady look answered, 'I can't make her out Mr. De Montreville; she is long and sharp, but shows too much canvas for a merchantman; and her yards are too long. What do you make of her?'

"The passengers had by this time gathered near, as De Montreville prepared to reply. The same smile played around his mouth, while the white teeth added to the remarkable expression. He looked around among the passengers, 'Captain,' he answered, 'it is hard to say; she is too light for a cruiser, but she is not a trader.'

“ ‘Well, what in the name of thunder is she then?’ brusquely demanded he.

“ ‘How should I know?’ laughed the young man.

“ ‘Well, she has got a suspicious look,’ answered the captain, using his glass.

“ ‘Can she be one of those light Spanish vessels, which cruize around Cuba?’

“ ‘No no, she is too lofty, too much like a Yankee clipper, but’ added he, ‘it may be that crazy West Indiaman the “Terror,” which has caused so much alarm among the English merchantmen for the past year.’

“ A light seemed to shoot from De Montreville’s eyes as the captain spoke these words; and he turned saying, ‘What do you refer to, captain? you are aware that I am a stranger in these waters, what vessel is it, called the “Terror?”’

“ ‘Why, you must know,’ replied the old seaman, as he rolled his quid in his mouth, ‘that the passage of the Registration and Emancipation Act, by England, has caused more discontent and trouble among the colonists, than ever was dreamed of by the framers of the madman’s plot; madmen they are, for thus letting loose upon a community, a nation of brutal negroes. Well, thousands of families are thrown upon the world homeless and penniless; for the twenty millions of pounds pretended to be given to the slaveholder will never all be paid, and, if it were, it can never compensate for the unbalanced state of things which must always exist; for the negroes are the most numerous, and there ever will be a clashing of interests. Among the ruined families was one in which there was a high-spirited youth, who did not see fit to think as his rulers did, and by his actions, exposed himself to the

anger of the government; so he was seized, and thrown into prison, where he would have remained, if some noble fellow had not lent him a hand, and he escaped. The young man had been a large planter, but by some wire-working among the big wigs, he got no allowance for one of the finest estates in the islands. So this young fellow raises from his friends a sum of money, builds and equips a fast schooner, and has been playing the devil with the English ever since. Nothing can take him; he is a splendid seaman, and could out-manceuvre Sir Walter Raleigh himself. The Home government, have even equipped a fast sailing vessel, and she has been searching for the "Terror" for months, while he has been sailing about at his leisure. I would not wonder if they caught him after a while, but I hope not, for England has abused her trust, and acted the traitor to them all.'

" 'Amen to that,' fervently exclaimed De Montreville, as he caught the captain by the hand.

" 'And I hope they may catch him, and hang him too, for a man is never safe as long as a devil like him is prowling about,' exclaimed one of the fat English merchants.

"De Montreville turned a quick and angry glance at the speaker, and replied, 'Take care, my friend, that your carcass does not serve as food for fish, before his.'

"The Englishman looked alarmed; but made no reply.

" 'Well, but you have not told me your opinion of the vessel, Mr. De Montreville.'

" 'Suppose it's the "Terror," captain?'

" 'I would not be afraid of him, then, for he is a chap of spirit, and if he is even in a bad cause, he has the

soul to stick it out against the fastest British cruisers, but what do *you* say ?

“ ‘ Well, I think she is a —’ here he paused, and looked around the crowd, and fastened his eyes on the Englishmen.

“ ‘ A what ?’

“ ‘ A *pirate* !’

“ ‘ A *pirate* !’ shouted the captain, in blank amazement, ‘ you are jesting ; you do not believe that ; I know that a few pirate vessels have been reported, but I always thought they kept far off, out of the cruising grounds of the national vessels.’”

“ ‘ Well captain,’ he answered, laying down the glass on the fife-rail, ‘ Wait till eight bells to-day, and you will see if I am deceived.’

“ The effect of this announcement upon the passengers was startling. The Englishmen seemed horror-stricken ; the fat old gentleman paced the deck in agitation, and broken expressions of alarm came from his lips. At last he went down into the cabin ; but not finding any place sufficiently capacious to conceal his bulk, he came again on deck. The old Spaniard merely pressed his lips firmly together, and looking first at the vessel, whose top-sails now showed distinctly above the horizon, and then at his two lovely daughters, who stood by, with pale faces and trembling forms, exclaimed, ‘ We can but die together, my children :’ but his look expressed a deadly determination.

“ De Montreville coolly lit another cigar, and walked away, leaving the group almost petrified with fear. He gazed at the strange sail, and when all eyes were turned to the same object, *seemed engaged in playing with the signal halliards*, at the mizzen-mast ; but no one could observe that he had bent on a red ball, and

that it ascended to the mizzen-truck. Nor did any one observe, as he gave a sudden jerk, that the thread broke, and a red flag floated out sullenly at the peak.

"There was a brass six-pound gun on board; and as every thing had been set on the brig which would draw, the attention of some of the passengers was now attracted to it. The captain ordered up all the muskets and ammunition on board. The passengers who had pistols or guns brought them out, and occupied themselves with putting them in order. A musket was put in the hands of the timid old gentleman, and he was directed to load it.

"'Load it!' he exclaimed, holding it out at arm's length; 'why, bless your soul, I never had one of the things in my hand before. I don't know how to load it!'

"A general laugh followed this; but the old fellow, plucking courage, marched boldly up to where the first mate was dealing out powder and ball. He determined the laugh should not be on him long. 'Oh! I never used them much, I mean,' he exclaimed; 'but, when I was a young man, I was considered rather a good shot.' This was spoken in so wavering and alarmed a tone that it called forth another laugh. Holding the gun, as one would an eel, by two fingers, he asked the mate for some ammunition. It was given to him. De Montreville was standing near him, and evidently enjoyed the old fellow's confusion.

"'Come, sir,' he said; 'I will be your instructor; first, then, is your flint in good order?'

"'Oh, yes,' was the reply, as he examined it.

"'Well, then, now for the load. Where is your ball? Well down with that; so! Good! Now for paper. Well, ram that down!' Here, about half an

old newspaper disappeared down the capacious muzzle of an '*old regulation*.'

" 'Now, for the powder. That is right—in with it—down it goes. Now, another wad! Return ramrod! There you are! Shoulder arms! Now you are ready for all the dead pirates in the Carribbees.'"

"The old gentleman thought that he had succeeded admirably, and smiled with conscious pride.

"The captain was standing by during all this scene, wondering and laughing; and when the old fellow marched off with the gun on his shoulder, he said—

" 'Well, De Montreville, you must be the deuse.'

" 'Why, captain, when I was a young fellow, the girls did say I was a devil of a fellow,' he answered, laughing.

"The old Spaniard, who was a pure Castilian, spoke to him.

" 'What do you think of all these preparations, sir?'

" 'They are useless, sir. One broadside from that vessel would blow us out of the water.' The old man sighed; and De Montreville turned again to the captain, who was now standing by the brass gun, and giving directions about loading it.

" 'What are you going to do with that pop-gun, captain?' he asked, smiling, contemptuously.

" 'Why, defend ourselves, to be sure.'

" 'Look at that vessel!'

"He obeyed. She had by this time drawn nearer, loomed larger and heavier than before; and he could now make her out to be a large schooner, under a press of canvas, and counted eight guns to a side.

"She was fast closing on them; notwithstanding the other vessel was straining every bowline and halliard, and carried every thing she had.

"Now, do you think it sensible to risk all your passengers, and your vessel, against such odds? We have the weather-gage of her, and still she overhauls us as if we were a piece of sea-drift."

The captain studied and looked confused; he saw the force of the reasoning, but could not tell what to do or say. "Well, what must we do then; give ourselves up, and let all our throats be cut, without raising a hand in our defense?"

"'Maybe she is the "Flying Dutchman," smiled the young man; 'and if so, it is said if you load your gun with a Bible, and blaze away at her, she will disappear in a wreath of smoke. Suppose you try it.'"

"'Nonsense, De Montreville! What would you advise me to do?"

"'Why, compromise the matter, certainly.'"

"'How?"

"'By giving her what she asks.'"

"'What do you think she wants?"

"'Why, our lives, our money, our goods, and every thing.'"

"'Then, we might have the fun of shooting at her a few times first, if we have to give up every thing any how.'"

"'What amount of specie have you got on board?"

"The captain glanced suspiciously at him, and quickly asked,

"'How did you know there was *any* specie on board?"

"'Why, I must be blind if I were not to notice the frequent visits of those English merchants to the hold; their anxious looks, and those fondling of kegs marked "hardware," and above all, their arrogant bearing.'"

"'Well, you are a close observer, certainly; but I

did not suppose any one knew of the existence of that specie on board, except them and myself."

" 'How much is there?'

" 'Two hundred thousand dollars.'

" 'Yes; well, you will only lose that.'

" 'Do you think so?'

" 'Yes, that is all; you may depend on it. You will see Cape Cod again.'

" 'If I thought that was all they would take I would not feel so uneasy; but it's pretty hard on them. I hate these puffed up English anyhow.'

" 'Do you know how they made it?'

" 'No, I do not.'

" 'Well, I do. They made it by supplying British slavers with merchandise, and money, and men, and then by assisting them to dispose of their slaves in return, to Brazilian planters, sailing under Portuguese colors.'

" 'How do you know that?'

" 'I have seen them in their operations; and these are the men who have caused so much trouble in the United States. These are the men who are preaching a crusade against the Southern States, with their hands fresh dyed in the blood of the slave. These are the men whose means go to build up the slave-trade, against which their voices are raised so loudly.'

" 'British slave dealers! thunder! Well, if it is so, I don't know but it would be as well for them to lose it all.'

"During all this time, the strange vessel had been drawing nearer; and her decks, covered with men, were seen without the aid of a glass. Every one observed the indifference of De Montreville, and the

carelessness with which he conversed; and it gave a tone of confidence to all around.

" 'There goes her flag,' said he, as an ensign floated out from her peak.

" 'Can you make it out?' asked the captain, gazing earnestly at the flag as it flapped against the gaff.

" 'Yes,' he replied; 'it is a red ground; a black slave kneeling; and a drawn sword.'

" 'It is the "Terror,"' exclaimed the captain, loudly, while the English appeared much alarmed.

" 'Oh, if it should not be an enemy after all!' exclaimed one of the young ladies, 'what a fine joke it would be.'

" 'Yes; but it is an enemy.'

" 'Do you think so?'

" 'I know it.'

" 'What are the signs?'

" 'Many: the flag is one, her actions are one, and her silence—'

"The exhibition of the red flag now floating out, and displaying itself fully, had caused a degree of consternation to all on board; and a great commotion was observed.

"The captain came aft, where De Montreville was standing. 'Sure enough,' said he, 'your conjecture was right. What are we to do?'

" 'Why, the best we can. You have answered her signal,' he continued, casting his eyes up. The captain looked also in the direction he pointed, and there, at the peak of the brig, floated a similar flag to the one exhibited by the schooner. A look of blank amazement sat upon the countenance of the sailor, as he asked in a faltering tone,

“‘How in the name of Creation did that flag get there?’

“‘Why, I presume it was hoisted there.’

“‘Did you see any one do it?’

“‘Not I: ask some of your crew. It is not my place to be your quarter-master.’

“The men were called aft, one and all; and swore that they did not hoist it, and saw no one do it. The passengers all testified to the same thing. Here was a nice state of things.

“‘I am bewitched,’ cried the captain, in a rage; ‘no one knows how a flag is hoisted on the vessel. Every thing is mysterious—out of the course of nature; and I do believe the “Spirit of the Sea” is abroad. No one knows how that devil’s rag got up there; then there it shall stay; and if we go to the bottom, it shall go with us, flying at the peak.’

“The old seamen shook their heads, and cast a suspicious glance at the bloody flag which waved gloomily over head, as if placed there by the ‘Demon of the Sea.’

“The chase was now within a mile and a half of the brig, and rapidly nearing. All hands stood and gazed at her approach, in stupid wonder and alarm.

“In a moment more, a wreath of smoke curled from one of her forward ports, the sharp crack of a gun vibrated on the air, and a shot whistled ahead of the brig. They had been heading to the south-west, but changed her course a point, as the brig changed hers. In working the vessel, the men went slowly, and with reluctance, to their duty. The affair of the flag had been evidently preying on their minds, and with their natural superstition, they yielded to an influence which

they dared not grapple with. They at once attributed the elevation of the flag to supernatural agency.

“‘That is a signal which you had best not disregard, captain,’ remarked De Montreville.

“He hesitated a moment, and then replied, that as there was no other course left for him to pursue, he supposed he must obey; and, accordingly, orders were given to shorten sail. As the sails were quivering in the winds, and the headway checked through the water, the schooner drew nearer, and her sailing qualities were more perceptible. The maintopsail was laid to the mast, and she remained stationary, merely drifting along. The schooner was within a quarter of a mile of the brig, and as she neared her, the men were distinctly seen through the open ports; she gently fell off the wind, and lay with her sails shivering. Ferocious faces, covered with shaggy beards of months’ growth, scowled upon them through the ports, and over the hammock nettings, while her long Spanish guns were terrible to behold, as they protruded threateningly from their ports; seemingly only awaiting a signal to open a volcano of flame and iron from their dark mouths. As they lay in this position, an officer sprang into the mizen rigging of the schooner with a trumpet. When near enough, a hoarse hail was brought over the water.

“‘What vessel is that?’

“‘Shall I reply, sir?’ asked De Montreville, seizing the trumpet.

“‘Ay, ay! do, sir.’

“He stepped to the rigging, and, mounting a few rattlins, answered: ‘Brig “Sea Foam,” from New York, for Guiana.’

“A murmur of voices was heard, at first like the

faint moan of the sobbing waves upon the sandy shore, then louder, as if those waves had been awakened ; it rose louder, and then swelled into a deafening cheer. It ceased, and again it rose on the breeze. Again it died away, and once more that cheer ascended loud and long from the schooner. All looked in astonishment at each other. De Montreville alone was calm. When the cheers arose, and the sea and air re-echoed to the sound, he smiled, and, ah ! that smile ! how significant and full of meaning ! and his lips curled, as if in pride or scorn. A few minutes more, and a fully manned and armed boat was seen to shove off from the schooner, and approach the brig. Each soul waited breathless, and in silence. It pulled around to the starboard side, and an officer stepped over the gangway. A half look of recognition passed between him and De Montreville, which the latter instantly checked by a slight frown. The officer then walked up to the captain, and asked for the brig's papers. These were brought out, and placed on the capstan. He advanced, and took them up. The crowd of passengers was, by this time, all huddled together in a group near the break of the poop, conversing in a low tone of voice, all except the old Spaniard, who stood with a pistol in each hand, between the stranger and his two daughters.

“ ‘ These are all right, captain,’ remarked the lieutenant, with a smile, as he checked off certain items with a pencil ; ‘ and now, will you oblige me by having hoisted up from the hold those kegs containing “ hardware ? ” ’

“ ‘ You said so,’ observed the captain to De Montreville, ‘ and now I believe you are the devil or—’

“ ‘ The commander of ~~that~~ vessel,’ replied he, laugh-

ing. 'Yes, ladies and gentlemen,' he added, as he turned to the surprised crowd; 'you see before you the first officer of that vessel. Nay, start not! no harm is intended; we will only relieve the gentlemen of that specie, which they can easily replace out of the first cargo of slaves; and then depart in peace. Come, to work!'

"The captain of the brig appealed to the passengers to sustain him, and to bear witness that he was forced to yield to the power of arms. Upon the order being repeated, the brig's men went to work to hoist out the heavy kegs, and they soon appeared on deck. The Englishmen protested loudly against the act, and begged most piteously that he would not allow his men to proceed in their labors. He turned a deaf ear to their cries. They then informed him that the money was not considered strictly a portion of the cargo, but as private baggage. At length the money was all out, and to their importunities he at length replied,

"'I choose to think as I please; I am the enemy of every thing English. She has been to me a harsh and cruel mother. My ancestors were the possessors of fair lands and broad domains; they had appertained to them for centuries, their fields teemed with golden grain, and their meadows were filled with flocks and herds; England with her corrupt ministers, hypocritical divines, her unjust judiciary, and dishonest peers, have framed laws to swindle and defraud. One of my ancestors was an adherent to the cause of that most unfortunate person, Prince Charles Edward, and when he landed in Scotland he joined him there; he was with him in his troubles, and sheltered him in his mansion; he remained faithful to him in his adversity, and took leave of him when he sailed for France. For

this, our family estates were confiscated; our honorable house broken up, and driven forth wanderers and penniless. I have visited our ancient birthplace; the fox burrows in the vaults, the lizzard casts its noisome slime over the walls, the owl sends forth her dismal cry from its towers, and all is desolation and decay; I have descended into the vaults where the bones of my forefathers lie, and I have sworn by them to be avenged.

“My father died a broken-hearted wanderer. But this is not all; fortune smiled, and a beautiful home was ours in the islands, now made hideous by the barbarous negro, by this most unjust act of England, in giving freedom to so many savages; and again were we driven forth, wanderers again; I was seized, my limbs were ironed, our lovely island home was desolated, and in ruins, and I in British irons, and for what? Why for merely urging upon my fellow sufferers, to refuse to sanction such an act of injustice. For this am I the enemy of England, and every thing that is English! With her and me there is *no* reconciliation; in war and peace I am the same. This is the cause of my present position. Come Mr. Squillgee,’ he said, turning to the coxswain of the boat, ‘get those kegs off.’

“There was now seen another boat pushing off from the schooner; it was the launch, and filled with men also. When it came alongside, the kegs of specie were handed down into her, and she prepared to return. The Englishmen looked with wistful eyes at the departing boat, and sighed. The steward of the brig was passing at this moment with several bottles of wine. De Montreville beckoned him, and taking one from him, ordered a glass. This was brought, ‘Now captain,’ I will drink your health, and; yours my friends,’ he added looking toward the other passengers. Here he

struck the neck of the bottle against the capstan, and as it flew off, the red wine was spilt on the deck, 'That is the only blood I ever have shed,' he said as he poured out a brimming glass. 'Come, cheer up my hearties!' he exclaimed, addressing the Englishmen, 'you little thought when you were abusing the captain of the "Terror," that he was before you. Suppose I treat you now, as you wished me served; but never fear; he laughed as he saw consternation depicted on their countenances, 'I won't hang you this time; we will meet again. Keep up a good heart, you will soon make up what you have lost. There are plenty more of your countrymen wanting outfits for slave voyages.' Then turning to the Spanish girls he said, 'Am I so very terrible a pirate after all?'

"Just at this moment a voice sung out forward 'sail ho!' All hands sprung in the direction pointed out. It was on the starboard bow. The captain directed the glass in that quarter, and after a moment exclaimed, 'It is a heavy vessel.' De Montreville took the glass, and then as he laid it down, quietly said, 'you are right, captain; it is a large and heavy vessel, it is a British frigate.' All eyes were directed to his countenance as he said this, but not a trace of emotion could be seen; all was as calm as a summer sea. There was an agitation, and whispering among the English, who were standing some distance off.

"De Montreville smiled, and turned to the captain, 'yes, captain, you will be compelled to follow the request of those gentlemen; you must communicate your loss to that British cruiser.'

"The captain looked surprised, while, as he spoke in a loud voice the English started, and seemed confused and alarmed; for that was the subject of their conversation.

“ ‘Well, if you see the commander of that frigate, present my respects, and tell him to *catch me, if he can.*” He remained a few minutes longer, then, bidding a courteous farewell to the passengers, followed the lieutenant into the boat. The captain went to the gangway: ‘Hold on a moment,’ he said, ‘I shall never be satisfied, until I find out how you knew there was specie in those kegs?’

“ ‘Oh,’ answered he laughing, ‘that is easy enough, I was in the agent’s office when the arrangement was made in New York; but I knew it was to be shipped before you arrived in New York, on your last trip, from *my* agent in Demerara.’

“ ‘Then,’ replied the captain, ‘you are not the devil after all.’

“ ‘Not a bit of it.’

“The boat shoved off, and a few minutes’ sturdy pulling, brought them to the schooner; the falls were hanging over the boom, ready for the boat, and tackle ready to hook; the boat was soon hauled up, sail made on the schooner, and when the sun was sinking, her hull was not visible to the brig, or frigate, which had by this time come into view; and only a few white specks were seen, like the wing of a sea bird on the horizon.”

“Oh beautiful! beautiful!” exclaimed all the ladies, “it would make quite a delightful novel if you only had put a little love in it.”

“Well, I am glad you like it,” he answered, “for this is the only pirate story I can tell to-night; I must go and write up my log-book, and take a lunar observation.” So saying he arose, and throwing his cigar over the taffrail, passed forward, calling all hands to change watch.

CHAPTER XV.

"The morning watch was come; the vessel lay
Her course, and gently made her liquid way;
The cloven billows flashed from off her prow
In furrows formed by that majestic plow."

THE ISLAND.

THE next day, about noon, the blue mountains which intersect Porto Rico, appeared in sight like azure clouds on the horizon.

In nearing the island, they were charmed at the extreme verdure which covered the rocks rising perpendicularly from the water. The tall cocoa-nut and palm-trees, arose straight and slender on the terraced heights; and the white villas embowered in bananas, formed a scene of extreme beauty and fertility. As they passed along the shore, peaceful and quiet villages appeared at the foot of the mountains which were clothed with dark green forests, and whose summits seemed to reach the clouds. The town of San Juan on the northern side, the port to which the vessel was consigned, was in sight, built on a fine high eminence on the end of the peninsula.

The vessel entered the harbor just at sunset, and as the evening gun was fired from the fort. The Spanish authorities came on board before the anchor was dropped, and no permits were given to land that evening.

Colonel Ormond learned from them that there was a French vessel to sail in the morning for the Caribbees; this gave him great pleasure, and by the aid of a small

golden present, the official undertook to convey to the master of the craft a note desiring him to remain until they could be allowed to change to it in the morning.

There were a good many vessels in the harbor, and it pleased our friends to see the "stars and stripes" floating among them, and to hear the sweet familiar language of home, ever and anon arising amid the confusion of tongues.

The passengers gathered on deck and passed the evening in pleasant conversation, in exchanging courtesies, and amusing each other with tales, in which the captain bore a conspicuous part.

The moon, just then a slender crescent arose, and threw a tinge of silver upon the town, the shipping, and the harbor; and the evening breeze ruffled the water, causing tiny wavelets, which formed a sweet and soothing music. The distant sounds softened by the space between the vessel and the town, the bursts of laughter from the forecastles of the different crafts in port, the light song, the big round oath and the tinkling of a guitar, all spoke a new and strange shore; and these mingled with the creaking of rudders, the rattle of cordage and swaying of the spars, the hail of "Who goes there?" and "Qui vive!" from the sentries, and the tap of the drum from the fort, the noise of turning out the guard, and the cry of the guard on the mole; all told of strange sights and sounds to be seen and heard.

In the morning, the Custom-house officer came on board, gave our passengers permission to depart and exchange vessels. This was welcome news, the captain had his own boat manned, and took them over himself to the French schooner. The master of the

vessel had signified his consent previously to receive them.

The parting with the old captain was affecting.

"Blast my eyes!" he exclaimed, as he shoved off; "I have followed the salt water for many years and made many a voyage, and had many a bright-eyed passenger, but none I liked as well as I do these." Dr. Grant threw a handful of silver into the boat among the men, and his liberality was greeted by cheers from them. The other passengers expressed great regret at the separation, and many kind invitations were extended to our party to visit them.

"Well," exclaimed the doctor, as he yawned and looked around, after having the baggage stowed in the cabin, and the ladies made comfortable. "Here we are, regular citizens of the glorious United States, taking a cruise among the cannibals of the Caribbee Islands; a perfect wild goose-chase, and if we get back safe and sound it will be a wonder. Who would have thought it a fortnight ago?"

"Well, doctor," laughed Ormond, "take it easy, we will get back safe, and it will do to talk about over our wine and cigars."

"Oh, dear Louisiana! with your civilization and refinement; a man never knows how to appreciate you until he leaves your fertile shores."

"Why, doctor, you are getting quite sentimental!" exclaimed Marie; "but see, there comes our captain: we are about to sail."

The commander in truth now came forward and welcomed them, apologized for his poor accommodations, but hoped for a speedy trip.

Ormond replied, and assured him that they were sufficient, and that the obligations they were under would

counterbalance any inconvenience they were subjected to. He bowed and smiled as only a Frenchman can, and left them to get his craft under weigh.

When this was done, he had an awning rigged, and a hammock swung; wine was brought, and the time passed very pleasantly. The land breeze had sprung up, with it the sails of the vessel swelled out, and they swiftly left the harbor. They passed the island of St. Thomas, and before night the high land of Santa Cruz had sunk into the ocean.

It was on the morning of the third day that the mountains of Martinique were seen, a blue line on the water, and among them were the Montagne Pelée, whose top seemed tipped with silver.

Ever since their departure from Louisiana, the health of Mrs. Grant had appeared to improve. She was no longer affected with that difficulty of breathing which characterizes persons suffering under pulmonary disease; the hectic flush had departed, strength seemed to be almost restored, and her appetite heretofore capricious and variable, appeared to have returned. She no longer required the support of the doctor, but seemed in all respects benefited. He was delighted; and when she took his hand and fondly smiled saying, "Doctor, I believe your 'wild-goose chase' will effect a cure in your invalid," none were more pleased than his two friends, and he turned off with a full heart and a prayer of thankfulness trembling on his lips.

As they approached the coast of the island, the land seemed to rise and gradually become elevated to the mountains, which occupy the center. A dense forest extended up their sides, and high up in the region of the clouds could be seen the white villas glittering in the sunbeams.

Upon the Bay of Port Royal stands the town of the same name.

When it became visible, Marie was standing by the bulwarks, gazing toward the land, and an indescribable feeling pervaded her soul. Before her lay the place of her nativity, of her childhood's happiness, and of her sorrows. In the cemetery lay the bones of her sire; but, ah! her mother, that gentle being whose pitying eye and loving hand had guided her infant footsteps; where was she? It was true that she scarcely remembered her, that only a dim vision of soft hands, gentle caresses, and tender words floated through her memory; but she knew that the ocean's briny wave hoarsely sung her dirge, and that in its coral caves and wreaths of sea-weed her bones lay unsanctified. But she remembered the laughing rivulet which came dashing down the mountain slope in the rear of the garden; she remembered the tall cocoanut-trees waving their broad leaves in the tropical air, the mango skirting the stream, and dipping its long branches, loaded with golden clusters of ripe fruit, in the cool water; and the bright-winged birds too, and the flowering shrubs, all these were too faithfully remembered.

Again, her departure from home for France; the years of kindness from the good ladies of the convent, the agonizing news of her mother's loss, and her return to her island home.

She remembered the little cottage of her aunt, in which she then dwelt, at the foot of the hill, where she, a beauteous and artless maiden, gathered shells, made fairy bowers, laved her fair arms in the crystal stream, twined flowers in her dark hair, and dreamed of a love which she had never felt.

Ay! and she remembered her kind old aunt; and old "Juba," the slave, who used to fix out her borders of flowers; and the visit of Berwick, the black-hearted fiend, who, under the guise of kindness, visited their little cot, and prevailed on her relative to allow Marie to accompany them to Jamaica. She recalled the delight it gave her when preparing, and the voyage, the kindness of Berwick and his wife.

But, ah! she did not forget the termination of that voyage, the agony and the horror, the deathlike stupefaction which took possession of her, when she was coolly informed by him that she was to be sold as a slave, her prayers and tears, and the cruel taunts of the devil who laughed at her misery. No, nor did she forget the slave-mart where she was put up and sold, and saw the gold counted out for her.

She never could forget these things; they were imprinted in her memory, and seared in her brain as with a hot iron, which left its indelible mark forever.

But she remembered the kind words which Ormond spoke to her, for it was his words of kindness and pity which had found an echo in her breast; those kind words which had, like a gentle south wind, touched the strings of her soul's harp, and called forth sweet and soothing tones, and made her love and trust in *him*.

Such were the feelings which filled the soul of Marie, and wrapt her mind in its own recollections, as she leaned against the bulwarks and gazed toward the bright isle.

Ormond stood by her side; but he was silent. He imagined the intensity of her mind's workings; that her feelings were wrought up to the highest pitch that her thoughts were too sacred for interruption--

and he was silent ; but his spirit-communed with hers as he stood by her, and he also gazed at the land which they were rapidly nearing—that land

“Which wooed him, whispering lovely tales
Of many a flowering glade,
And founts’ bright gleam in island-vales,
Of golden-fruited shade.”

They approached the harbor and entered it about midday, between Forts Bourbon and Louis, frowning on them, and the tricolored flag of France waving on the breeze. There was no opposition to their immediate disembarkation, and they left the vessel at once.

As Mrs. Grant was considerably fatigued, they took up their residence at the *auberge premier* of the town. Their rooms were large and airy, a spacious covered balcony overlooking the bay, and the sea or land breeze ever blowing, which rustled the colored muslin curtains pleasantly. Cool India matting covered the floors, and vases of flowers, which gave out their fragrance, were placed around the room, and fans of woven grass to cool the heated atmosphere. On the whole, it was extremely novel and delightful, and the females now reposed themselves after the fatigues of the voyage.

Colonel Ormond and the doctor took a ramble ; they wondered at the antique cast of the buildings, and made their remarks on the unusual sights which presented themselves, at the costumes of the people, the merchants, soldiers, Creoles and beggars, with a sprinkling of negroes.

Colonel Ormond inquired of an aged Creole at the market, if he remembered the person of an old Creole woman named De Lange, who was Marie’s aunt, and who formerly lived in the rear of the town ?

The old man thoughtfully replied, "Indeed, monsieur, I do remember an old lady of the name, who lived at the foot of the mountain; but years have passed since she has been dead. It is difficult to remember persons in this country; the changes have been great; so many different rulers have we had, and so often has the flag of England waved over us, that many of our old citizens are dead or removed."

He replied, "We are strangers here; I have a letter for the *Prefet Apostolique*. Can you direct me to his residence?"

"Certainly, monsieur," answered the obliging old man, and walking on before for some distance, he pointed out a large building on a square: "There, monsieur, his reverence lives. Ah! and he is a holy and good man!" He paused; they thanked him, and passed on.

The palace of the prefect, or the superior ecclesiastic of the island, was situated on one side of a square, fronting some public buildings, and near the cathedral. As they passed the door of the mansion they observed a good many persons in waiting; hence they concluded to defer their visit until the following day.

It is not our intention to give a minute detail of their actions here. Our time must be occupied with more absorbing themes.

That evening a ramble was proposed; the whole party sallied out, and turned their footsteps to the suburbs of the town, where the beauty of the villas of the foreign merchants embowered in foliage invited them to linger. Thence, at the instance of Marie, they sauntered toward the old quarter of the town; she hoped to see the residence of her childhood as it was

once; and yet she half wished that she might be disappointed, as in truth she was; the mountain slope was the same, and there was even one old familiar palm-tree, but the home which had sheltered the youthful Marie, was gone, and in its place, arose the proud dwelling of an English merchant; innovation was even here. Progress, in this far off clime, had raised her head. All was changed; the little stream which once had run so merrily, keeping time, in its silver murmurs, with the clear and bell-like voice of Marie, was choked up, and gone; its bed was dry; there was no familiar spot to the eye; even the little birds, her playmates and friends, were fled; her flowers disappeared, she felt like a stranger in her childhood's home; she heaved a deep sigh, and turned sorrowfully away.

The next morning Colonel Ormond alone walked to the Palazzo of the head churchman. There were as usual a great many persons in waiting; among them could be noticed an officer or two of the French army and others, who seemed to wait the pleasure of this functionary. The arrival of Colonel Ormond attracted unusual attention, and he had to undergo the scrutiny of a dozen pairs of eyes.

He had not long to wait after sending in his card and letter. He had anticipated rather a haughty reception from the churchman, from the aristocratic state which surrounded him; but what was his agreeable surprise, upon being ushered into his presence, in a small room fitted up as a cabinet, to find a gentlemanly, urbane person, apparently about sixty years of age, who received him as a fond father would a son.

He arose, and met him with extended hands.

"My son," he said, in the most bland manner, "I am glad to be able to meet you; and how did you

leave our worthy friend?" he added, tapping the letter which he held open in his hand.

Ormond assured him of the good health of his correspondent. A chair was placed, and he was requested to sit down.

"You must not think," he said, smiling, "that we are hard to approach, because of the mode we do business; for there is a great deal of work for us; and we have to reduce it to a system." There were several priests in the room, with whom it appeared his business was concluded, for he delivered to them several papers, and terminated his discourse in a low tone.

While thus engaged, Ormond had an opportunity to make a few observations. The room in which they were in, overlooked a court-yard; in the center of which, a fountain threw up its crystal jet of water, and falling again, burst into a little shower of spray, that imparted a delicious coolness to the atmosphere. A border of dark mold surrounded the fountain, and a thick circle of rich flowering shrubs, lent a sweetness to the air, which even penetrated the study wherein he sat.

A row of arched doors bounded the prospect.

The room itself was furnished plainly. In a niche in the wall, was an ivory statuette of Jesus, and opposite, one of the same material of Mary, while on another portion hung a splendid painting of Christ bearing his cross; which Ormond, as a dear lover of the beautiful, knew to be from none other than an Italian hand.

On the other side, hung a large map of the French West Indies; and a rosary of silver was suspended beneath it. A small cabinet of rich workmanship was

placed on one side, and appeared to be filled with papers.

The Prefect now arose, and as the priests withdrew, he approached our friend.

"My son, I again welcome you, and must ask, Is there aught in which our poor services can avail you?"

Pleased with his mildness, and suavity of manner, Ormond, as he gazed at the venerable prelate, felt an instinctive love and reverence for him.

"Father," he replied at once—but at first in rather a confused, and embarrassed manner, "My story is long, and I fear will tire your good nature."

"Proceed my son, speak freely, let naught restrain you," he said, drawing a chair close to his side.

Ormond began, and gave him a history of the abduction of Marie, her sale as a slave, and of her purchase; his connection with her, the birth of his children, his present situation and wishes in regard to her, the reason why he did not wish to make the matter public in Louisiana; and of his views and wishes in regard to Marie.

When he first commenced, the ecclesiastic fixed his large dark eyes on his countenance with an interest in his story; but, as he proceeded, the Prefect gave a slight start; and riveted his gaze more intently, and with a melancholy interest upon him.

He heard him through without interruption, and when he had finished, replied:

"My son, you are impelled by honor to make this reparation; it is a noble sentiment; and also I hope, by a belief in your responsibility to society, and a desire to obey the word of God, which encourages matrimony. You have been very neglectful, but at the

eleventh hour, it is not even too late. Your views are high and virtuous, and your purpose sincere; your wishes are natural, to protect those whom God has given to you. But your story has awakened a train of memories, which, had they never been retouched, would have gradually faded into dusty oblivion. I dare not even now, until I have had time to collect my thoughts, and consult papers, say more to you, but I may say to you. I believe God has sent you to me. Oh, how wonderful are his ways!"

So meaning were the looks of the priest, and so strange his words, that Ormond felt an awe which he could not account for stealing over him, and a thousand impressions were scattered confusedly through his mind. He scarcely knew what to think, but one question was ever foremost. "Has he ever heard of Marie before? Does he know any thing of the history of her parents?"

The Prefect remained silent a few moments in a musing attitude; then looking up, he said:

"In case you have to carry into effect your views regarding the emancipation, it will be simple. There must be prepared a petition, in which you must state your wishes; as the same law rules here that is in force in Louisiana. When this is presented to the judge, and there is no opposition, letters of manumission are granted. There will be a delay of twenty days. But, my son, since you have come to me, I have had old recollections aroused, and it may be that I have the key to your happiness in my hands."

Ormond started. "Nay, my son! be not too sanguine. I bid you not even to hope; but come to me at twelve the day after to-morrow, at this place, and perchance, I may be the means of giving you some

joyful tidings." Ormond arose; he was bewildered. The words of the venerable man had excited his hopes; and he wished, he hardly knew what; but he bade him adieu with a full and grateful heart, and hastened to rejoin his friends.

To Dr. Grant he narrated faithfully all the circumstances attending his interview.

"Well, Ormond, something will come of it, sure. I am glad we have come."

The time passed; and, on the appointed day, Ormond found himself among a crowd waiting an audience at the Prefect's palace. He was expected; and as soon as he sent his card, was admitted to the presence of the churchman. He received him with even more kindness than before; and smiled benignly on him as he gave him his blessing.

After the usual salutations were finished, he said—"It is as I expected, and I am able to be the bearer of good news; but there is one who can reply more satisfactorily to your questions than I can." He arose, and rang a small bell on the table. A lay brother appeared. "Martin," he said, "Father Moïèse."

The brother left the apartment; and in a few moments there entered a person whose mild and noble countenance, united with his venerable appearance, caused Ormond involuntarily to do him reverence. He was a tall and aged man, whose snowy hair, unlike the clergy's generally, fell over his shoulders in a mass. His eye was a deep blue, and beamed peace and goodwill to all men. He was attired in the common dress of the order; and was indeed an imposing and holy-looking man. "Father Moïèse," exclaimed the Prefect, as he presented him to Ormond, and waved him to a seat, "this is the gentleman to whom your

communication must be made." Then turning to Ormond, he said; "I had to dispatch a messenger to Father Moïése, who is a parochial priest, and lives about thirty miles from here; and, as he is aged, I appointed this day for you to meet him here."

Ormond expressed his deep regret that he had been the cause of giving so much trouble to the good priest.

"I would do much more to serve one humbler than you, my son," answered the old man, mildly.

"Proceed, father!" said the Prefect.

"I was sent for one evening," commenced the priest, "now some eight years ago, to receive the confession of a dying woman, a Quadroon. She was very ill, and wished to make a statement to me in a matter in which she had been concerned, and in which she thought she had not acted altogether right. She said that she had been the attendant and friend of a young French officer attached to the ordinance department of Port-Royal, many years before. His name was Horace St. Médard. During his residence at Port-Royal, he had fallen in love with, and married a beautiful Creole girl, by the name of Marie St. Valle. They had one child, whom they named Marie, after her mother. The father died of the yellow fever, and left to his widow a small property. The widow, whose marriage had been private, lived very retired; and had sent her child to Paris to be educated in a convent. She was young when she left home. The mother, in a few years, determined to make Paris her home, as her relatives all resided in France. The ship in which she sailed was capsized at sea, and all on board perished. Then the idea first occurred to the woman (who had charge of the property in Port-Royal until it could be disposed of) to send for the young Marie,

claim her as a niece, and thus retain the property for her own use.

"The plan was put in execution, and carried out; and, upon the return of the child, then some ten years old, she went to live with the woman, who represented herself as her aunt. Things remained in this condition until the girl had grown up into a handsome woman, when she was persuaded by a Captain Berwick to allow the girl to pay a visit, with his wife and himself, to his estates in Jamaica. She agreed to it. They sailed, and she had never seen them more. The woman, who really loved the girl, took it much to heart, and when she did not return, and time passed on, sold out the property and removed into the country. She was taken sick, and now, on her death-bed, she made this confession, and gave into my keeping a large package of family papers, including the marriage-certificate, and other important documents. The woman died, but I had the precaution to send for a notary, who took down from her own lips the tale."

During this recital, Ormond trembled violently; cold drops of perspiration trickled down his forehead; he gasped for breath; and at length managed to articulate, as he looked fervently upward—

"Oh, God! I thank thee that thou hast led my footsteps hither."

"That is right, my son," exclaimed the Prefect; "return your thanks where due—to the Almighty."

Ormond asked, hesitatingly, "And, good father, have you these papers with you?"

"I have, my son!" he answered; as he drew from his breast a packet of yellow, and time-colored paper, tied with a black ribbon.

Ormond reached out his hands to grasp them, and pressed them convulsively, as if fearful of letting them escape. With a trembling hand he untied the string, and behold! before him were the evidences of his happiness. Hastily did he peruse them. The certificate, deeds, letters to Marie's mother, from her father. How he prized them! Marie's mother, oh, delightful thought! Her mother! That connection between the past and present. The shame-spot was now removed forever. His heart was light already—happiness! His Marie had parents to whom she could look back without shame—with pride. The blot on his children's name could now be removed forever; there was no blood in their veins but what was pure—no attainting stream to poison life to its core. The two priests gazed on him with interest, as these conflicting feelings made themselves visible in his countenance. The Prefect again rung the bell, and a domestic appeared, bearing a salver and wine. He pressed Ormond to drink, thinking it might calm his agitation.

"Oh, what do I not owe you both!" exclaimed he, grasping their hands; "life and happiness, all; every thing! Can I repay you? take my fortune! all, and it will never half repay you."

"Father," he continued, "do you leave the city soon!"

"In a few days, my son."

"Then I will see you again; do not detain me; I seek those who wait for me, never dreaming of that immense happiness in store for them! Forgive me if I go now; I will see you and thank you when I am calmer. I go now; bless me both."

"God bless you, my son!" exclaimed both the priests, as they laid their hands on his head.

Ormond arose, and rushed from the apartment.

Shall we follow him to the hotel? Shall we attempt to depict Marie's joy, their friends' happiness? Oh, no! it is too sacred, we will not attempt it, we would miserably fail; but we know that there was joy too great, happiness too great for utterance, and the swollen bosom must—must find relief in tears!

It was several days before Ormond called again at the Prefect's palace. He was received as usual with kindness, and found closeted with the prelate a distinguished avocat, who practiced in the courts of the island. He was a vivacious little Frenchman, and when the subject of Ormond's visit was brought up, he entered into it warmly.

"Monsieur," he said to Ormond, "I would advise you to effect the acknowledgment of your children in your own State; it would effect no good here, and would be easier of reference."

Father Moïse now entered the room, and was greeted by Ormond only as a grateful heart can feel.

"There is one thing, monsieur," said the Prefect, "you will attend to. We have your property in charge, which is the rightful inheritance of the mother of your children; the Church has the revenue, and is ready at once to relinquish it. You will find she has been a faithful steward."

"I am grieved," replied Ormond, "that you deem me ungrateful enough to take it. The Church must keep it; my circumstances place it in my power to do this without any injury to myself."

At first it was rejected, but by the firm refusal of Ormond to receive it, they agreed that the Church should be the recipient; and it was arranged that the present avocat should wait upon Marie at the hotel, to receive her renunciation of the property.

To all Ormond's offers to the good old Father Moïse, he gave a firm and steady yet gentle rejection, saying that he had, from his youth upward, devoted his life to the Church, and in her service would he die. He, however, agreed to accept some small present from him as a memorial of his gratitude.

It was on the second day after Ormond had visited the Prefect that the agent of the Church called at the hotel, and received a warm welcome from Ormond. He advised him not to take the original papers away with him; they were too precious to be risked to any casualty, but to deposit them among the records of the court, and only carry away copies of the whole. He eagerly acted upon this advice, and proceeded to put it in execution. There was one record, however, which he determined to carry away, and that was the *record of his marriage*; and he accordingly called upon the Prefect, and preferred his request that he would unite Marie and himself according to the rules of the holy Church. Gladly, willingly, he consented to perform the ceremony.

The next evening a small party were gathered at the Prefect's own chapel, and before the altar he joined the hands of those whose hearts had been so long united.

It is needless to attempt to paint the extreme joy which swelled the heart of Marie, and the manly delight of Ormond, as he drew toward him an ever-loved, but now a respected and cherished wife. Language is inadequate for the expression of such feelings. Mrs. Grant participated in the joy of her friend, and wept upon her neck. The Doctor, as soon as they were free from the chapel, swore that the "wild-goose chase" had now terminated beautifully; and that al

beit the cooking among the cannibals was not exactly to his taste, still he felt many times repaid for risking his precious neck in foreign parts. Altogether, it was a reunion of unalloyed felicity.

A week elapsed ere an opportunity presented itself for them to return to the United States; but at length a brig was advertised to sail for Havana. Calling upon the Prefect, Ormond expressed in feeling terms his gratitude, and placing in his hands a sum for the benefit of his charities, received his blessing, and departed.

Securing the precious package of papers in duplicate among his baggage, he, assisted by the doctor, transferred it to the brig. It was about sundown when the party left the land, and trusted themselves to the billowy deep.

Upon arriving at Havana a vessel was easily found to convey them home. No incident occurred during the trip, except that Mrs. Grant became more unwell as they approached the shores of Louisiana; and as she lay in her berth, or reclined on deck, kindly attended by Marie with all a sister's love, and sympathized with by the other passengers, her wasted cheek and shrunken form, combined with her general languor, filled her husband's heart with a fearful agony. He was at a loss what course to pursue; he was confident that her lungs were diseased, and was fearful that the affection was too deeply rooted to be eradicated. This filled his breast with an indescribable emotion, and made his bold heart vibrate with sorrow. He tenderly loved her, and the thought of losing her was unendurable. He could not conceive the possibility of her being snatched away in the bloom of life and beauty; then sighed as he noticed the brilliant

sparkle of her eyes, and her thin, attenuated hands; and heard in the silent watches of the night that sharp and painful, that mournful cough, which sometimes convulsed her system.

It was again evening; night covered with her dark mantle the heaving sea, and the gleaming stars were stealing forth in beauty. All the passengers were gathered on deck.

It was midnight: Ormond and Marie were standing at the taffrail, gazing back over the ocean, and then throwing their eyes forward. The Balize was in sight.

Dr. Grant was leaning over a seat, on which reclined his wife, and all were looking eagerly forward.

What a thrill of joy shoots through the heart as the traveler, weary and sore, approaches his native land! What a joy pervades his frame as he longs to claim his heritage, and press the dear soil which gave him birth, to clasp loved friends to his breast, to mingle in old familiar scenes, and renew old and loved associations!

Thus Ormond felt as he stood with one hand of his wife's in his own, gazing steadfastly over the water; and when at last the light, that beacon of hope to the heart of the wave-tossed mariner, shot its trembling beams across the face of the restless sea, gleaming at first faintly, and then more strongly, and at last showing bright, steady, and clear, a general shout of gladness arose from all around.

"My dear Marie," he said, drawing her closer, "there is our own dear land, our home, greeting' us with its welcome smile."

She replied by a gentle pressure of his hand, and a tear of happiness.

Oh! how justly proud is an American! He may visit the shores of the Old World, hoary and venerable, renowned for the ashes of the past, its heroes, its orators, and its statesmen; he may mingle in its scenes of splendor, its pageants, and its pomps; he may tread the classic shores of Greece, and dream among the monuments of departed ages; he may wander among the islands of the Mediterranean, or be surrounded with the luxuries of an Oriental court; he may tread the sands of Palestine, and visit the scenes sacred to Christianity; he may recline among the olive groves of Italy, and under its bright skies drink in its intoxicating inspiration; he may stand at the base of the Pyramids, or wander among the ruins of the Acropolis; he may be shaded in a bower of love, among spicy islands, where every breath is a perfume, and every sigh an exhalation of pleasure; where the rose blooms always, and the song of the nightingale is ever heard; where violet-colored dreams greet his slumber, and every thought is bliss; but still he fondly clings to the memory of home—he still sighs for the proud mountain oak, and the clear, gushing spring, where the trout leaps in gladness, and the pure mountain breeze, as it plays in the tree-tops, whispers of “Freedom.” He still sighs for that holy land of liberty, where every man is a prince, and which is shadowed by the wing of God.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Tentanda via est."

WE will now return to Mr. Talbot, whom we left conducting the epistolary business of Colonel Ormond, and arranging in his own mind matters to suit himself. Things had not at all changed in any respect, save the advance of the season. The rolling time was over, and the levee was crowded with the sweets of a year of labor.

Talbot had made some new acquaintances; he had hunted, and fished, and rode, attended parties, and in all respects enjoyed himself; but he still nourished in his own heart those evil passions which make man's nature akin to the fiend.

He had never heard from Stamps, and felt anxious to receive a letter from him; for he had formed the acquaintance of a feeless lawyer, who, on ascertaining that he was the relation of Colonel Ormond, tried to cultivate his friendship, in the hope that "something would turn up;" for he learned the circumstances of Ormond's life; and he had planted a hope in the bosom of Talbot which haunted his pillow nightly after.

One evening, as he was sitting in the gallery, tired, and covered with dust from a long ride, old Pierre

came up the road, and gave him a letter from the post office.

He glanced at the direction, and hastily put it in his pocket. He knew the hand: it was from his boyhood's friend—the tool he intended to use. It was from Stamps.

As soon as Pierre had gone, with his chatter and his offensive familiarity, he stole to his chamber, and then, locking the door, hastily tore open the letter. It ran thus:

“NEW YORK, January 3, 18—.

“MY DEAR TOLLY—

“You can not imagine the delight the reception of your letter gave me. I had gone to the post-office many times, and, after being often disappointed, yours was put into my hands. I devoured its contents. You are a lucky fellow, Tolly; and I am afraid your letter has run me crazy. It has made me very absent lately, and I do a great many things to be laughed at. The first day after I got it, I thought of nothing else. Old Mrs. Snap, our landlady, who has not improved in disposition since you left, asked me,

“ ‘Will you have coffee or tea, sir?’

“I was thinking of you, and the pretty Southern girls, and says I, ‘*Creole*, if you please, ma’am.’

“ ‘*Creole*, sir?’ says she, as sharp as a broken vinegar-bottle. ‘What do you mean by talking about them *niggers* here?’

“I blushed up, and was scared to death; but I got off by making an excuse.

“But now I have got to tell you some thing worse than that. Tolly, I have lost my place. The way of

it was this :—The other evening, as I was carrying a bundle around to a customer, I noticed on a theater-bill, in the biggest kind of letters, a play for that night, called, 'The Yankee in India ; or, The Way to make a Fortune.' The title struck me, and I determined to see it. I went into the pit, and it was first-rate. But the next day old Hunks heard of it ; so he called me up and gave me a lecture. I thought of you and your freedom, and, as he said a lot of hard things, I just politely told him to go to blue ruin, and that I could do very well without him. I told him you had gone to Louisiana, and had a big sugar plantation, and lots of niggers ; and that I would go and see you. He looked astonished ; but then he called me an impertinent beggar, and ordered the book-keeper to make out my account, and pay me off. I felt like whipping him, but left without saying much.

" And this, Tolly, is the way I lost it. Maybe I was a fool, and maybe I was n't. I have got some money, but not more than enough to support me till I get a situation. Tolly, now, my old boy ! fly around, and try and look for a place for me by the time I get there, for I am coming, sure. I have not fixed the time yet, but expect to get a little more money soon, and then I will be with you.

" I remain, your friend, as ever,

" W. STAMPS."

" Senseless fool !" exclaimed Talbot, when he had finished reading it. " To act in this manner ; to throw away a certainty for an uncertainty ! but I think, maybe I may have a use for him, though I fear he will be a dead weight on me : and I want to ride light when

I do begin the race. And so I may expect him daily? Well, I wish Ormond would come. He must like to spend money on his lady. Ha, ha! But he can afford it."

Here he heaved a deep sigh, and slowly left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON a calm and pleasant evening, a party consisting of Ormond and Marie, Dr. Grant and his wife, stood upon the guards of a steamer as she was nearing the old homestead. There were the old house with its ancient pointed roof, and its wide galleries, the live oak-trees waving their gnarled branches in the air as if in welcome, and the tall chimneys of the sugar-house in the distance. There were the dark green of the orange, and the still darker hue of the well-trimmed evergreens in the lawn. The little birds too, seemed to trill forth their happiest notes to bid a welcome home. Oh, how dear seemed every thing around to Marie now, as she gazed delightedly upon this scene! How different from her former moods! She was now a loved wife, an equal; and the dark brand of slavery was removed forever; and as she looked at Ormond whose bosom swelled with pride as he cast his gaze on her, she felt that her cup of happiness was complete, and that a life-time of worship could never compensate for his kindness to her.

As the negroes came crowding up, overjoyed, her heart beat faster, and seemed to expand into a second being within her, and she returned their greetings as kindly as they were given.

She entered her well-remembered chamber, and

there—oh, joy! she found on her boudoir-table several letters. Ah! they were ship-letters! and one from Madame Civallé. And there was one in Zoe's sweet little hand. Eagerly she tore them open, and drank in with all a mother's fond love the happy intelligence that all were well; the feeling of the soul poured out in all the pure simplicity of childhood, the sea, its wonders, the strange sights and sounds, all found a place. They were written at sea, and sent home by a return packet. How she wept and smiled, and wept and kissed again and again those dear lines which those sweet fingers had penned. Ormond joined in her pleasure, and their kind friends. There was one thing which detracted from their pleasure: it was this. Upon Marie's table was found another letter: it was from Herndon, who had been compelled a few days before their arrival to leave for the North on business of great importance. It was connected with a large amount of bank-stock which he owned in New York; and to save himself he had been forced to go on this journey. In the letter he fixed no date for his return, and they were thus left in the dark in regard to his movements.

The next morning their kind friends prepared to depart. The separation between Marie and Mrs. Grant was affecting; they clung to each other as sisters near and dear, wept and promised to meet again.

Talbot had remained away all night, and now came forward surprised and confused. He seemed, however, to be overjoyed to meet his host; but Marie at the sight of his cold, snake-like glance, felt a return of those old feelings of aversion and mistrust steal over

her; but when she remembered how firmly she was united to Ormond, and that she was now beyond the reach of any contingency, she tried to banish all those feelings, and remembered the prophecy of old Celeste only as an idle dream.

Talbot placed in his patron's hands all the correspondence which had arrived during his absence. He now informed him of his desire to take charge of the situation secured by him. Ormond agreed to it, kindly supplied him with letters to his friends, and a sum of money. He departed, and in the course of a week a letter from him informed them that he had entered the house, and was settled, at the same time thanking them for their kindness and hospitality.

Thus we leave our characters at this period. The family of Colonel Ormond resided now wholly at the plantation. At Marie's desire the residence in the city was broken up, and the property offered for sale. He contracted his business, and devoted himself wholly to the improvement of his estate, and contributing to the happiness of his slaves. Marie was received in the neighborhood as an equal, although it was not known even that she was wedded; but the example of Mrs. Grant was speedily followed, and she was a welcome guest every where. So much for breaking down the barriers of custom. This notice of her by Mrs. Grant created a revulsion in her favor, and courtesies were showered on her on every side. It was not surmised that the journey the party had taken was other than for the benefit of the health of Mrs. Grant. Ormond had never mentioned the matter to any one, not even to Talbot, and the public were as ignorant of it as ever. Mrs. Grant's health now so sensibly declined,

that by the best medical advices Dr. Grant concluded to try the restorative influence of the air of Italy upon her enervated frame, but with an almost hopeless view of the case. She had become much weaker; the bloom on her cheeks was the hot flush of fever, and the brilliancy of her eyes was the sparkle of disease. He sailed immediately.

Letters were received from Zoe and Estelle. They were much pleased with their situation, but longed again to be fondly pressed to their mother's breast, to share their father's joy, and be safely sheltered in the circle of domestic love. They longed again to hear the gentle evening breeze rustling the leaves of the orange boughs, and to recall those delightful moments now remembered as the fleeting dreams of love and youth.

Marie felt lonely and sad when Ormond was absent; she sat by the solitary hearth and wept as she thought of her bright-eyed ones so far away from home, and the shadow of departed hours hung gloomily over her soul.

"Come home!—There is a sorrowing breath
In music since ye went,
And the early flower-scents wander by
With mournful memories blent;
The tones in every household voice
Are grown more sad and deep,
And sweet words wake a wish
To turn aside and weep."

Although Ormond had married the mother of his children, there was one act still to be performed: it was to legitimate his children; and for this purpose he went to New Orleans. His friend Mr. Bland was at

home, and to him he applied. He accomplished his wishes to his satisfaction, but strange to say, neglected to mention a word to him of his actions in the island of Martinique.

He returned home, feeling now that he had forever secured the safety of his children, should he be called away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Death! thou hast had thy harvest!

* * * * *

We can but mourn—for thou hast gathered in
The brightest and most beautiful below."

GALLAGHER.

SEVERAL months passed, and the buds of spring had given way to the flowers of summer, with its balmy air, and birds, and sunshine.

It was with feelings of the deepest grief that letters were received from Dr. Grant, announcing the slow, but sure decline of his wife. Sometimes they would come to Ormond, and frequently to Herndon, whose overseer would at once, on seeing a foreign post-mark, send them over to Ormond. Dr. Grant was in Florence, with a soul bowed down with grief. He saw that the disease was too deeply rooted to be eradicated—it was beyond the leech's art, and laughed at the impotent attempts of medicine to conquer it. He remained by her side, cheering her by his devoted love and assiduous attention, and anticipating her slightest wish. But he could not save her—she was sinking. The pearly luster of her eye, her restless nights and days of pain, the death-like cough and transparent hand, too surely told that the fair brow would soon be bathed in the dews of death; that those

bright orbs would soon be closed in dissolution ; that tongue, now uttering tones of melody, would be palsied ; and that once damask cheek and lovely form be resolved into the dust from whence it came.

He strove to cheer her drooping spirits, and to instill into her soul the hope of a future happiness. He knew her goodness, and had no fear for her when she came into the spirit-land. But he strove to smooth her passage to the grave. He had at first tried to hope ; but now his deep professional knowledge told him that she had been marked ; that a great and fearful change would soon take place, and that he must hope no more. Still he traveled. He visited the "Holy City ;" then wended his way to Naples, to Venice, to Messalina, to Greece. But the blue skies of Italy, bright as an angel's dream ; the breath of the orange-groves of Sicily ; nor the flowery fields of the Ionian Isles, could save the withering blossoms of beauty. Like a rare exotic transplanted to a colder clime, it faded, and withered, and died.

"Poor, poor fellow !" feelingly exclaimed Ormond, as he read one of Grant's desponding letters, and the great tears stood in his eyes ; "he is unhappy ; he is far, far away from loved friends and home ; heartless strangers surround him ; he is buried in sorrow, and oh, poor Caroline !" Here he clinched his hands in a convulsive manner, then raising his eyes to Heaven, fervently said—

"Oh, God ! if it be possible—if it be thy will—let this bitter cup be spared him !"

It was on a calm Sabbath morning that Ormond sat in the gallery ; it was peaceful and serene, not a cloud floated across the blue fields of heaven ; the air came

softly to the cheek, and all was at rest. His thoughts were with his friend, in that far off clime; and his prayers were for the idolized Caroline. Suddenly his attention was drawn to the sound of horse's feet—he looked up—it was Herndon's overseer riding toward the house. An ill-defined feeling of alarm and disquiet pervaded his breast—he felt that he was the bearer of bad news. He entered the gallery; gloom was upon his brow, and sadness in his eye. Ormond now felt, as he pointed to a seat, that his prophetic heart was right. There was a terrible something to be divulged, and he shrunk from meeting the sorrowful truth. The overseer handed him a letter—it was sealed with black. As he held it out to Ormond, he shrunk back; a strange feeling of horror thrilled through his veins; it was like a dreadful night-mare; he could not shake it off. It possessed a strange fascination—that death-sealed letter; but he took it; he broke the seal. "It is all over!" he exclaimed in feeling accents, and uttering a deep groan, pressed his hands to his eyes, then slowly read it through with a sad interest. Here it is:

"GENOA, June 14, 18——.

"DEAR HERNDON,

"You can not conceive with what feeling I now sit down to write you. The last sad blow has been struck, and my Caroline is lost forever to me. Oh, my friend! if you knew my sufferings. Sad and desolate, with not a friend! alone! Oh, Herndon! may you never know the full meaning of that word. The misery of a lifetime has been concentrated in a few days.

"On Thursday night, about eleven o'clock, Caroline, who had been gradually declining, seemed more lively than had been her wont; and I had lain down to snatch a moment's repose before an open window. I was dreaming of home and happiness. Oh, cruel vision! Suddenly I was awakened by the sound of the rustle of the curtain of her bed, my senses being, by continual anxiety and watching, preternaturally acute; I hastily arose; the light had burned out; I called, there was no answer! Alarmed, I lit the lamp. I rushed to the bed, reproaching myself for my selfishness, while she might be suffering. But, oh, Heaven! how shall I describe my horror!! She had raised herself, and her head was hanging over the edge of the bed, with her long dark hair in tangled masses reaching the floor, and soaked with blood! She was in the agonies of death. She had been seized with a fit of coughing, an artery had been ruptured, and her white clothes and pillow were covered with bright blood. How I survived that shock I know not. I raised her up. She smiled faintly—her dying eyes brightened—her lips tried to pronounce my name; and her last pure sigh was wafted to its native Heaven. I—

"But I shall go mad! I laid her in the ground—I can not weep! I care not for life! Oh, for *you*! for Ormond and his gentle wife to be with me!

"I leave here to-morrow, for I know not where; but I will roam the world—it is now a vast sepulcher to me. I will seek the desert, and my cry will answer the howl of the hyena. I know not when you will see me, but if I survive this shock I will meet you again.

"There is a lock of hair. I send it at the request of

my lost Caroline, to Marie! Tell her that her poor friend sleeps in a citron-grove, where the air is balmy, but the tear of friendship does not water her resting-place.

“Your unhappy friend,

“GRANT.”

The tears chased each other down the cheeks of Ormond as he read this record of grief. He grasped the lock of dark hair contained in the letter, and left the gallery to seek Marie, and mingle his grief with her's.

It was a Sabbath day in New Orleans; the bells rung out the holy invitation for all to enter the house of God. Multitudes passed along the street; the merchant, wending his way to the more frequented parts of the city, to learn the news; the clerks, to dispose of a day of relaxation from business. Here was the stranger from the North, with his fine, fresh countenance; and there the Southern gentleman, returning home from abroad. Here plodded a stolid old Dutchman, on his way to mass; and immediately behind tripped the smart Irish servant girl, bound on the same errand. On the other side of the street you see a young Hibernian, who, just promoted to a new dray and horse, comes out in all the glory of stove-pipe hat and blue cloth, and is throwing the most exquisite glances toward the aforesaid servant-girl from his pea-green eyes. Here is a *Creole of Jerusalem*, who is making mental calculations of what his stock of second-hand goods bought the day previous at auction will bring; and behind him is a Christian, whose thoughts are, for this day at least, not upon things of this world.

There are many other parties we might point out: the *fast* cotton planter, who having just got through the *bottom* dollar of his crop, and the last one his merchant would bleed, is now about to leave on the Sunday packet for the coast and the little towns above; but he is happy, for he has already got acceptances enough to more than cover his next crop. Oh, rare economy! There is a sugar-planter, who has just paid his bill at the hotel; he is going up on the same boat. He is now on his way to the livery stable, to order shipped a pair of fast ponies he purchased the day before; but he is also happy, for his plantation is well protected, being covered a foot deep with mortgages. Among this crowd might be observed, engaged in earnest conversation as they slowly walked along, two young men. One is our acquaintance Talbot, and the other, by his gaze of curiosity around, seemed to be a stranger. He was of a heavy-built form, with dark hair, and seemed to have a not unhandsome countenance, as he laughed and smiled, and appeared to be highly pleased.

Talbot was acting as conductor to his friend. He has determined to launch out that day, and impress Stamps (for it was he) with an idea of his importance, and to treat him to a dinner at a fashionable restaurant. A word here about Talbot, however. Upon his arrival in New Orleans, he was well received, through the influence of the letters of Colonel Ormond, and entered upon his duties in the house. Here he had remained ever since. He had not risen in rank or salary. He was secretly disliked, although no charge could be brought against him, and was thought to be a coward, in consequence of his refusing to ac

cept a challenge sent by a fellow-clerk for an alleged insult: he preferred making an apology. He was never fully trusted. It was about this time that he succeeded in obtaining for Stamps a situation in another house upon his arrival. Stamps had reached New Orleans the evening before, and lost no time in calling upon his friend, with whose address he had been previously furnished. And now we find them on this day resuming their habits of former days.

"Well, Stamps," observed Talbot, "we are at last again together, and in the South."

"Yes, Tolly, my boy!" replied he; "here we are; and I am as delighted as a dog with two tails to be with you. I have longed and sighed for this time again and again."

"Well, Billy, I think we will make something out of it yet. I only wish I could take you right away to Ormond's plantation; it would be a great deal easier than clerking, and I never did and never will like it, and this thing of being hired to go and come, like a 'fetch-and-carry' spaniel. Billy, when I see the lordly planters come into our office, smoking their fine cigars, and see them strut about and call for their supplies, and get a big check on the bank to go and frolic on; and when I see the airs of arrogance they assume, I hate the race, and wish I had never been brought into contact with them; it recalls my own situation too forcibly. But, heigho! Billy, I know you are not afraid of the devil, and you know that no one can match me plotting."

"I know that, Tolly; and I always thought you were cut out for a great man."

"Thank you, Billy. If I do, you shall share the glory; for you will assist me to raise our fortunes."

"All you have got to do is to tell me what to do, Tolly, and if it is to pull the old un's horns off, I will try. I will do any thing for you."

"And I for you, Billy. I am not as scary as I used to be; I have fought a duel since I have been here."

"The devil you have, Tolly!" exclaimed the gratified fellow, gazing at him in admiration. "Hurrah for you! The fact is, that is the only objection I ever had to you. I thought you were not as brave as two men ought to be."

"Oh, pshaw! that was policy, Billy—policy, sir."

"Well, have you got up any scheme, Tolly, by which we can make a raise?"

"Yes, I have a golden idea; but it is too new yet, and I must bide my time. I must have patience and perseverance."

"Yes, for the Bible says, 'Patience and soft soap will thread a cambric needle with a cable.'"

"That's a wrong quotation, Billy."

"Is it? Well I do not know, I have not read the Bible through very often. But what is the speculation that promises so much?"

"I will make a quotation, Billy. 'The right hand should never know what the left doeth.' And it is not worth while to say any thing about it until the time comes, for come it will some of these days."

"Well, I suppose you know, Tolly; and you know when it is time to strike I'm on hand."

"Yes, Billy, my friend," replied he, turning and grasping Stamps by the hand. "And to show you that I have confidence in you, I will say that at the

death of a relation, with a little figuring, I will come into possession of a fine sugar-plantation and a mint of niggers."

"Oh! don't I wish the time would come. Lord, I would lay in bed till ten o'clock every day, and I would have a nigger to even pull my eyes open. But I thought you used to be the strongest kind of an abolitionist?"

"Yes, so I was; but it was fashionable. That was policy also. I am a slavery man now."

"There is one thing certain, Tolly, and that is that I would like mightily to own some of them."

"They are very convenient, Billy, I assure you; and this speculation of mine, provided every thing remains as it does now, will embrace a large number."

"I wish it was time to go into it now."

"Never mind, the fruit will get ripe and fall of its own accord in time."

In such conversations as these, and an occasional reference to old times, the two reunited friends whiled away the morning. Down by the State-house and Hospital to the Catholic cemetery, and into the French portion of the city to the Place d'Armes, they turned and finally brought up at the door of a celebrated restaurant.

Soon they were seated at its plenteous board, and the heart and purse of Talbot opened generously. A splendid dinner, with fine wines, cheered the palate of Stamps, who was not habituated to discuss and pronounce upon the gastronomic wonders placed before him.

That night Stamps was introduced into the theatre, to his great delight.

The situation of clerk was still open in the house, and Stamps entered it. The salary was small, but sufficient for his wants; and he might have been happy and contented, had it not been for his wily friend, who was tutoring him for his own use.

It will be remembered that a sister of Talbot's had been betrayed, and decoyed away from her home, while he was a youth. He had heard by a friend in New York that his sister was in New Orleans, and was pursuing a course of infamy. He had inquired, and found no clew to her.

CHAPTER XIX.

"With her white hands folded gently,
Upon her pulseless breast,
And a snowy shroud around her,
We laid her there to rest."

IT is hard to leave the scenes of love and friendship, and even the records of uninteresting events, where there are some soft, soothing and refined passages in life; but it is more terrible still to pass to scenes of death, where agony is triumphant, to watch the ebbing pulse, the heaving bosom, and glazing eye.

Upon the receipt of the intelligence of the death of poor Mrs. Grant, the grief of Marie was overwhelming. For many days she refused to be comforted. Ormond begged and pleaded with her, to moderate her grief, to calm her emotions. He proposed to her a short trip of pleasure; to which she assented, as it was his wish. He thought a change of scene might obliterate the images of sadness with which her heart was peopled, or at least moderate the intensity of thought, and recall to her cheeks a portion of that bloom they once wore and the smile to her lips. They accordingly set out. He exhausted the rounds of pleasure for her. From place to place they fled, leaving thought behind them; and, later in the season, he had the pleasure of seeing her recover a portion of that

cheerfulness she once possessed, and then they bent their steps toward home.

The pestilence was abroad in its fury ; the city was in mourning. Many of the wisest and best of the land had been taken off in their prime. Consternation and horror prevailed. Hundreds of those who were in health, and had fondly dreamed that they were spared, the next sunset saw shrouded ; and still it called for its hecatombs of victims. Medical science stood appalled and aghast at its own impotency, and that of the most powerful drugs, to combat the fearful disease ; and the victim was shut out from the aid and sympathy of his fellow men. There were then no benevolent institutions, formed to relieve and succor the destitute sick, and perform the last sad offices for the stranger. The dead-cart alone rumbled along the streets, the death-bell came booming sullenly and solemnly, and mingled with the melancholy cry of "Bring out your dead !" and seemed like the knell of despair, as it was rung through the midnight streets, creating horror and agony in those who had thus far escaped. All who *could* go, were gone ; and those who remained, staid behind to battle with disease and death. The grave-digger could not perform his office fast enough ; and gold was showered liberally among the hardy laborers, to induce them to remain, and cover the bloated and putrefying corpses that came pouring in.

At such a time as this, Ormond and Marie arrived in New Orleans, on their return home ; and Marie was attacked with the fever. In the airy chamber of a large hotel, sat the faithful Ormond, by the bedside of the fever-stricken patient. It was the seventh day

from the first attack ; and the case was unusually severe, and singularly protracted. Around her couch were tearful attendants, who stood and gazed with pity on her shrunken features and throbbing breast. Ormond sat and held the hands of the sufferer, and looked in intense anguish on her form. Every pang she seemed to feel inflicted an intense one on him. Haggard and unshaven, with eyes bloodshot from long-continued vigils and burning like coals of fire, he was dead to the external world. He lived but in her, and was deaf but to her anguish.

For three days had she spoken no word. All that science and skill could accomplish was done ; and, although her physicians remained constantly with her, the case was left in the hands of God.

Her medical friend sat by her, watch in hand, counting the fleeting moments ; and then, signing to the nurse, moistened the parched lips of the patient with some liquid. Since she had become insensible, she had never spoken, but lay in a kind of stupor, exhibiting no signs of life other than the heavy breathing and uneasy murmurs. The fever had wrought a fearful change on that once polished and rounded form ; and the pale cheeks and sunken eyes were hollowed by disease. But there Ormond sat, heeding naught on earth save the deep pulsations of her heart, and the moans of anguish which ever and anon burst from her tortured bosom. There lay the idol of his affections, who, racked by pain and disease, lay dying. Oh ! how tortured was his soul, and how deep was his grief, as he looked upon her, pressed her hand, and whispered hoarsely, " Marie ! Marie !" But she saw him not, she heard him not, she knew not

that his heart throbbed with convulsive emotion, and that the deep sighs which came sobbingly forth, indicated a breaking heart. Oh ! his generous soul was filled with a deep and dreadful agony, and great drops of sweat ran down his forehead. His hand was pressed to his burning eyes, which had not been closed in slumber for so many days of misery. But he, the devoted, the high-hearted Ormond—he heeded not sleepless nights and days of suffering ; he tired not of prayers uttered, deep and fervent, at the midnight hour. No ; he remained by the couch, lost to every thing save her.

It was only by the presence of the physician, and the gentle pressure of his hand on his arm, that he was aroused. He cast his eyes wildly around him. “ Doctor,” he asked, with an almost maniac glare, “ is there any hope ? ”

Slowly and sadly the doctor shook his head ; and, as he looked upon the form of the sufferer, a tear rolled down his cheek.

Marie stirred, and moaned ; she opened her eyes, and looked about her as if in surprise, then a look of intelligence passed over her countenance, as she realized her situation. Her eyes met those of Ormond’s, who was tenderly bending over her ; a faint flush overspread her cheeks, and a sparkle of recognition appeared. “ Charles,” she faintly whispered ; but although he bent his ear over her pillow, and intently listened, she was silent. Tremblingly she raised her thin and feeble hand ; and seemed to be groping like a person in darkness. Ormond took it in his, and tenderly pressed it ; she smiled slightly, and it was still. Like a bird seeking its nest, it had found it, and was

content. As his eyes were fixed on her, a convulsive shudder passed over her system.

"Doctor! doctor!" exclaimed he madly, half-arising.

The physician placed his hand upon her wrist, he raised the drooping eyelids, and then took Ormond by the hand to lead him away; but he shook off his hand impatiently, and creeping closer, leaned over, and, in a voice choked by emotion, cried,

"Marie! Marie! Oh leave me not yet; remember our children, our friends; oh! stay yet awhile! Oh! God, is this justice? is this thy divine love? spare her, oh God;" and he threw himself on his knees by the couch. She moaned—the destroyer had come—he started—a change had passed over her—a spasmodic tremor agitated her system, a slight murmur, another sigh, and, with the softness of the summer's wind, her spirit passed away, and all was peace. Ormond gazed wildly at her a moment in silence; and then with a deep groan sunk senseless to the floor.

A massive slab of marble bearing the simple word "Marie," marked the place where was laid the once peerless and pure.

"She was a cherished treasure, too good, too pure for earth;
And she left us in her beauty, her innocence and mirth;
So we laid her in the grave-yard where the willow branches wave,
With the cold earth for her pillow in the dark and silent grave."

It was many days ere Ormond was able to sit up, even in an invalid's chair. His medical friend attended him with all the kindness of a brother; he strove to cheer him. With an all-abiding faith in the mercy of his Heavenly Father, he strove to direct his thoughts

to that better world, to teach him resignation, and submission to his wise decrees. "When all other supports," he exclaimed with Christian mildness, "are thrown down, and worldly comfort has departed, then, my friend, the solace which the belief in *His* divine goodness gives, is beyond expression. You have been chastened by the hand of a friend. Pour out your soul in confidence to Him, have faith in His power to give comfort to a wounded soul. Human philosophy is here of little use; depend on Him who alone can dry your tears, and give relief. We know that our Redeemer liveth, that a few short years, and we shall all be called; we shall join our friends in that land of light, and love, where sorrow never comes, and happiness is endless and complete." Such was the exhortation of the good and Christian physician to the desponding Ormond.

When he had recovered sufficiently, he returned home, but it was months, before he was again able to ride about and give his attention to business. He felt that the death of Marie was such a stroke on him that he never would entirely survive it. He roamed about the house, and plantation; and pleasure seemed to be forever dead within him. Every object he saw was some reminder of the loved and lost, and opened again the fountain. He did not indulge a childish unmanly grief; his was a true, a noble, a dignified and non-complaining sorrow. He thought of her in the days of her youth, brightening every place with her presence of the thousand endearing words, and her kind actions, of her every look and expression, and of every circumstance connected with her. Ah! how often he sat in that old gallery, and let his imag-

ination wander back to scenes long past and gone! How often would he enter the door of the chamber, while memory would almost cheat him into the belief, that he again heard that bird-like voice warbling joyously, or her light footstep hastening to meet him as he approached. There by that window, where the sunlight quivers and struggles to find an entrance amid the jasmin clustering around it, was her favorite seat, the tendrils extending inward, as if striving to meet her and be near her; and there was her accustomed chair, with her little work-table, and its pearl ornaments—the many little articles of use and decoration, which only female taste can appreciate. There was her favorite volume, exactly as she had left it; and there her last work, rolled up, neatly folded, and laid away, just as it was placed by her fair hands before her last journey with Ormond. Here are her toilet articles, and in that armoire hang the many dresses, which so often clasped that sylph-like form. There were the memorials, which caused the tears to gush like an overcharged fountain. There were the memorials, of one who had gone, and left no stain on earth. He would at eventide steal off into the garden, and there under the old oaks, where the happy family circle had so often been gathered, when the night dew began to fall, and the whippo-wil's melancholy note be heard, there the *black hour* would come upon him, and those bitter, bitter moments would end in tears—those bitter moments which nothing can soothe, nothing can sweeten. Then would he pray, that he too might be called, that his pilgrimage be ended.

It must not be imagined, that Ormond was neglectful, far from it; his friends often came to visit him,

and tried by every means in their power, to draw him away from the melancholy to which he seemed so wedded. He would receive their advances kindly and faintly smile to please them, but his grief was beyond the reach of solace. He often longed to say to them, that it was not a mistress he mourned, but a wife; his heart boiled at the thought of any aspersion being cast upon the memory of Marie; yet, when he had made up his mind to speak, the words would seem to choke him, it appeared so unnatural to have to defend her—the loved one.

He had never written to Zoe and Estelle, since the death of their mother; and now he set himself to the sad task. He had not before written to them at all, for Marie relieved him of that. She had promised to write to them in regard to their visit to Martinique, yet it had been deferred until it was never executed. Herndon was singularly silent; indeed he did not even know his address. At one time Ormond determined to arouse himself from his lethargy, to throw off the incubus which bound him. He concluded to go to the North. He often wished for Grant, and even formed the determination of going to Paris, and thence to Italy. In this plan Dr. Grant's father-in-law eagerly acquiesced, as he felt assured the change would do more than any thing else, to enable him to throw off this morbid grief. He even wrote to Zoe, informing her of his expectation. But still he hesitated, and, as the season advanced, he gave it up. His energy of character was gone, and he settled down into a drooping, listless state of melancholy. He seemed never more satisfied, than when several of his friends were with him, and in eager conversation among themselves

he would sit buried in his own reveries, absorbed, unheeding, and lost to every thing. He at length wrote for Talbot, who had left New Orleans when the yellow fever was at its height, but returned at its subsidence. He obeyed the summons quickly, and when he alighted at the steps, was met by Ormond with a melancholy smile and a courteous welcome. This appearance of sincere sorrow and deep feeling even affected Talbot, and he was for once touched by the dignified and patient grief exhibited by his noble kinsman. He was inexpressibly shocked at the great change which had been wrought in his handsome features, and while he gazed, a secret thrill of emotion, a species of electric exultation, such as a fiend might feel while he listened to the scream of agony of his victim, found a place in his bosom. Secretly he thought of Ormond's death, and hugged himself with the idea, the possibility of being the nearest collateral heir, as the reader is aware that he was ignorant of the action which had been taken in regard to the *wife* and *children*. So he secretly nursed those feelings of ambition and avarice, and dreamed on.

Time flew and Ormond was evidently sinking; his friends observed it, and sorrow was in their breasts, as they saw his noble form bowed down by grief, and looked upon his wasted cheek. Talbot was now his constant companion. Ormond gave him a *carte blanche* to his factors, and charge of much of his business. He repaid this confidence by the exhibition of the solicitude of a son. So kind was Ormond to him, and so generous, that often while he sat and gazed at him, as he reclined on the lounge in the gallery, with his eyes cast on the floor, and absorbed in a melancholy reverie,

he almost relented, and human feeling would pass through his breast.

But when he would turn his eye toward the fields of waving cane, the towering chimneys of the sugar-house; upon those noble buildings, and think that all this lordly property might one day be his; then would all softer feelings be banished, the sorrowing countenance and sad eyes of his friend be forgotten, and the flame of avarice burn so bright and clear, that he would have strangled his own first-born if it had thrown any impediment in the way of his ambition. As the probability of the speedy death of Ormond was presented to him, by his extreme weakness and excessive pallor, he would feel as if the battle were over and the victory won; his step would be firm, and his bearing more commanding. He sometimes visited New Orleans, and often saw Stamps, who had lost his place, but still clung to his old friendship. Talbot always supplied his wants, for he felt there was a time coming when he should need his services, and he would be repaid with usury.

Zoe was now fifteen years of age, and Estelle two years her junior. They had never left the walls of the convent since their entrance; but now they signified a wish, if it were agreeable to their father, to return home. They had well-improved their time, and taken advantage of the opportunities offered, had readily become possessed of all those arts and accomplishments which are so elegantly taught by the ladies in those schools. Their native tongue was not neglected, while other languages were taught in all their purity. They were bright creatures, full of animation, and beloved by the ladies and their fellow-pupils.

Since the reception of the news of their mother's death, Zoe had become more serious and melancholy in her disposition. Louis Lamotte still went to the Polytechnique school, and sometimes came to see them. He had at first felt for Zoe that pure childish preference over others which is exhibited by a fondness of association, and afterward by assiduous attention, resigning all pleasures for the sake of the loved object ; and, ultimately, when years of maturity crown them, the sly glances, the palpitations, the sighs, the tears, the tender pressure of hands, and the soft acknowledgments. Louis, as we have said, had, when a boy, sought the society of Zoe ; the close companionship of a voyage had told upon a susceptible organization, and he felt that he loved. He had never had an opportunity in visiting them, of making his sentiments known ; but, by slight actions and an occasional pressure of Zoe's hand, which caused the warm rich blood to suffuse her face and neck. She knew that she was loved. He heard from her of their wish to return home, and he warmly seconded the desire. He had now grown up into a fine young man, with an eye of fire and a heart as noble, brave and pure, as a high course of moral training could make it.

As the spring drew on, and Ormond grew no worse, but rather better, Talbot conceived it advisable to return to his business. One evening he sought his patron, and, with apparent reluctance, mentioned his wish to return to New Orleans.

"Mr. Talbot," exclaimed Ormond, feelingly ; "I can not express to you my grateful feelings for your kind attention to me. I will not be ungenerous enough to ask you to remain to listen to the vagaries of an in-

valid like myself, and think, perhaps, it were better for you to return; but come and visit me; come and stay with me; you shall ever be a welcome guest, and in any event, remember that you have a friend upon whose kindness and purse you can ever rely."

After some further conversation they separated.

A few mornings after, he came to bid adieu to his host. The parting, on the side of one, was an exhibition of feeling which was pure; on the other it was forced.

A package was placed in Talbot's hands, as he turned to go on board the steamer. In the privacy of his state-room he opened it, and a check for *five hundred dollars* was exhibited, with simply the words in the envelop—"From an affectionate friend." He grinned with ghastly delight, and exclaimed; "This will do to begin the campaign with; we must always have the treasury chest full; for there may be lawyers to fee if this affair does come off;" and with this exclamation of unfeeling, fiendish brutality, he stalked to the bar, and, with a lordly air, ordered a cocktail.

As he passed through the crowd of passengers, a sentence from one of them seemed to be aimed at him; for it struck home with peculiar force, and rung in his ears for many a day afterward. The expression was, "Well, who knows but it is best to be honest after all?"

"Who knows?" mentally answered Talbot, as he passed forward, puffing a cigar, and pressing the pocket which contained the precious paper.

The summer came, and passed into the fall, and the joyous echos of the cane-cutters resounded through

the densely covered field. Ormond had improved in health.

"I really believe, Hall," said he one day to the father-in-law of Dr. Grant, who was on a visit to him, as they were walking slowly along to the sugar-house; "I really believe that I shall get well after all; and if I care about recovering, it is for the sake of my children."

"I know that you are much stronger than you were," answered his friend, looking at him with affection; "and you know with what delight your friends witness your amendment."

"Ah! Hall, I have kind and warm friends indeed."

"I believed once that I should have the sorrow to witness your death, Ormond; but God has listened to your prayers as well as mine."

"I have been chastened heavily," he answered, with a sigh; "but the Almighty has seen fit for me to survive the sad blow."

"We have all of us had our heart-strings strained near to breaking, Ormond. Poor Caroline! she sleeps in a foreign land." Here a large tear stole down the cheek of the kind father, at the recollection of his daughter's fate. "I wonder where Grant is now?" he suddenly asked.

"God knows! You have never heard from him since that sorrowful event?"

"No."

"I wish I could be with him."

"I think if you could have gone to Paris when you spoke of it, Ormond, you would have recovered long since, and even now a sea voyage would benefit you."

"I hardly think it advisable to leave home now, Hall; but next spring, if I am spared, I will go for my children. Zoe is now sixteen years old, and she must take her mother's place in the family."

"They must be very lovely girls now. I would have visited them if I had gone to Italy before poor Caroline died; but you remember I was not at home when that black, black letter came."

Nothing more was spoken for a few minutes, until they arrived at the sugar-house.

"I see that young man Talbot has returned to the city?"

"Yes, he returns to his business. I shall always feel grateful to him for his kind attention to me while I really needed it."

"Well, Ormond, I am thankful to him also, and do not think hard of me if I speak my mind; but I can not say if I am right. It is impossible for me to like that man. I can not believe that he is sincere. There is too great a desire to conciliate; it is apparent in all he does. I never trust a man who is ever striving against his natural feelings to become popular, except he is a candidate for some office, and then it is policy. But I pray God I may be deceived, and that you may find him true."

"I disliked him myself at first, but time has worn off my prejudices."

"I may not be right, Ormond; but mark me if that man does not show the cloven foot yet."

"God forbid! Hall. I would not be deceived; for I wish the young man well, and it is my intention to act a good part by him."

"I shall never have any confidence in him."

"I would give a great deal to hear of Grant," said Ormond, turning the conversation.

"And I," answered the other. "I much fear from his silence that he lives no longer."

"Oh! for those once happy days of peace and tranquillity, when, with dear friends around us, we feared no interlopers, no stratagems; but those days have gone forever, and happiness is no longer ours."

"Our loss is great, Ormond; but time will bring healing on its wings."

"How contented, how perfectly satisfied we once were! Our pleasant meetings, our pic-nics, our hunts—do you remember them?"

"All, all! and I remember that dinner in the woods, when Hartley was first brought here. What a clever gentleman he was! I was not there, but I heard the doctor and Herndon often laugh about it, and describe Pierre's big drink."

"Yes, yes," sighed Ormond; "how strange Hartley never wrote!"

"'Tis the way of the world."

"The world! it is not so bright to me as of yore; the sun is darker, the flowers have lost their fragrance, and when the spring breezes pass gently by me, they carry sorrow on their wings; there is a breathing melancholy in all nature. I sometimes catch myself going to the chamber which she used to occupy, with some message in my mind; and I startle myself with the echo of her name on my lips, as it sounds through the deserted chamber. I hear her voice in the evening winds, and every perfume which is wafted past me reminds me of the lost. Alone, I seem to hear mysterious voices in the air, and almost fancy I feel

the stirring of unseen wings near my cheek. Are we not watched by our friends in the spirit land? Do they not guard us? Are they not near us? Do they not rejoice in our joy, and sorrow at our unhappiness?"

"This may be true, Ormond; but your silent musings have affected your mind; it is not healthy Mingle more in the world; try to take an interest in other affairs; do not give way to such morbid fancies; they will work you an injury."

CHAPTER XX.

"Plots and counterplots."

"He who spreads a snare for others often gets caught himself."

THE reader will now imagine a period of two years passed away since the last-described scene.

The characters of our history remain in the same situation in which we left them. Ormond had gradually improved in health, until he acquired a seeming vigor of constitution as in earlier days, and at times he was almost lively. He had deferred his trip to France until Zoe and Estelle were so urgent to return that he proposed to go for them. Dr. Grant had never been heard from, and his friends supposed him dead. Talbot was still a clerk, and Stamps also had a situation in the same house. As often as Talbot met Ormond in the street, he came to the conviction that he had counted without his host, and the memory of the words he once heard, "Who knows but it's best to be honest after all," often came into his mind. As his hopes died off in proportion as the health of Ormond increased, so his intimacy with Stamps was lessened. Poor Ormond! little did you dream when you met the viper in your walks, when you kindly gave him your hand, and offered your purse so generously, when the warm pressure of your hand was returned, little did you know that at that very moment the cold-blooded scoundrel was speculating on your death:

that the rosy hue of your cheek sent a death-blow to the hopes which he was cherishing. But so it was; for he was Talbot still.

But a change was again to creep over the good and pure, the high-hearted Ormond; and although the health of this noble man seemed restored, there was in his breast a secret agent at work, slowly but surely sowing the seeds of death. And this was hastened by a severe cold which he caught on the lake, by the upsetting of a boat.

During the winter, his disease was much benefited by remaining close in the sugar-house, while they were boiling sugar; but when the crop was taken off, his cough returned, and his friends were anxious for him to try the effects of a sea-voyage. He, at their urgent entreaties, sailed for New York, intending to take a vessel thence for France and Italy. He reached New York; and a month's sojourn, awaiting the arrival of Herndon, who had remained at the North during all this time, convinced him that it was useless to struggle now with the disease. His medical advisers candidly informed him that his lungs were much affected, and counseled him at once to repair to Louisiana. He returned home to *die*. Herndon arrived in New York three days after he had left, and his business would not permit him to follow him. His whole fortune, save his planting interest, was involved in the great commercial crisis at this period; and he remained, fighting with the harpies of Wall-street for his rights. He had intended long since to return to Louisiana; but his legal friends advised him to remain on the ground. Report also said that he intended to introduce a New England bride to the Creoles of

Louisiana. At all events, he found some inducement to remain; and, save a voyage to England, he had never left the scene of his labors.

Ormond arrived in New Orleans. Talbot met him in the street after landing, and was startled by the look of extreme emaciation and suffering which he exhibited. He noticed it, and smiled, attributing it to the shock at seeing the change.

"It is nothing but natural. You see I can not last long."

"You look very badly, sir," returned he; "for when you sailed for New York, it was said you were improving."

"I had improved much, but it was only temporary. I became worse immediately, and I feel that my days are numbered."

He insisted on Talbot's calling on him while he remained in the city, and slowly walked to the hotel.

"Now," exclaimed Talbot, as he watched the receding, but still portly form of his benefactor, "now comes the tug of war! Ormond, I feel sorry for you. Still calm and proud amid your decay—a noble ruin; but oh! I feel more for myself, who have been so long crushed under the gaunt hand of poverty and contempt: still, I would even save you if I could; but I can not, and the time has arrived which makes or mars me."

That evening he sought Stamps; they were together all the evening. He now exhibited a great deal of good fellowship for him. Poor Stamps was delighted, for he still felt an attachment for Talbot.

"We have not been as intimate as we used to be,

Billy," he remarked, as they seated themselves at the table of an oyster-saloon.

"No, Tolly; but you know I always did like you, though you have rather cut me lately, when you got among them big relations of yours."

"Oh! that is a mistake of yours, Billy; I always thought the same of you. You know a man must show some attention to his relations; but let it be all forgotten. I will pledge you in a bottle of wine. You know I can not drink any thing strong. Here, waiter!—a bottle of Hock."

"Well, Tolly, don't order any of that sour stuff for me; I would rather drink good vinegar."

"What will you have then, Billy?"

"Brandy! brandy! Tolly."

The order was given again, and brandy brought for Stamps. "That's the liquor for the souls of men," exclaimed he, fondly tapping the decanter.

"Here is to our old friendship, Billy," said Talbot; "may it never decay."

"I'll drink to that, with pleasure, Tolly; and here is a hand and a heart that never failed a friend."

"In that relation, Billy, I may have occasion for them sooner than you expect."

"Ah! the sooner the better."

"Billy, listen to me. Suppose I were to tell you that the time draws near when we have to act; that the period is approaching, when the ripe fruit is to be shaken by the autumn wind into our lap."

"The Lord send it along quickly!" he exclaimed, fervently, "and let me be in at the gathering."

"Well, my boy, I have looked for signs, and they have been given me."

"What is one of the signs, Tolly?"

"One of the signs is, that some of the obstacles between the property and myself are about to be removed—by death."

"What, not that old gentleman that has been so kind to you?—the one, I mean, who was so distressed by the death of his wife."

"The same."

"Well, Tolly! and could you sit by, and think of yourself when you saw that he was suffering?"

"Well, well, n—not exactly," replied Talbot, alarmed, lest the cold-hearted fiendishness of the thing should disgust even his tool. "The fact is, this property, by right, belongs to our family; and after his death, I am the nearest collateral heir. It is nothing but fair that I should inherit after him. Come, Billy, take another drink," he continued, seeing Stamps contract his forehead, and bend his eyes thoughtfully down on the table. "Here is to you; and when we take possession, we will have the best horses, and good liquor, and cigars, all the time."

"Ah, Tolly," he said, tossing off a glass of brandy, "I never expect to have all those things till I get to heaven, and even then, they will put off some second-hand things on me."

"Ah! but, my boy, we will have new things; we will wake up all creation; come and go when we will, and no one to say a word to us. You will come in for half, you know."

"That's too good, Tolly! but will you do as you say? Won't you, as soon as you have done with me, kick me off, like all the other rich folks do?"

"No, sir! but you don't believe your friend would do that? Ah! no, Billy!"

"I don't think you would; but I do think it is a heap better to be honest."

"Oh! yes: who would be guilty of any thing mean? my very soul scorns it. At the same time, a man must take care of his own interest."

"Certainly, Tolly, certainly; and to help you there, I will join you in any thing to make a raise." Here he took another sip of brandy. "But where does this old gentleman live?"

"Never mind! you will find that out too."

"You are wonderful sly, Tolly; but here is my hand on it!" he cried, loudly.

"Look here! don't tell every body in the room of it," cried Talbot, looking around him, alarmed.

"Well, I won't; but what is it you want me to do?"

"Well, you know that before a man takes possession of his property there are certain formalities to go through with, all mere formalities, though."

"Oh, yes, certainly! that is, I suppose so, for I never had to go through much ceremony in taking charge of my property; but I will do any thing for you in the world except swear to a lie, and Tolly, I'll be hanged if I do that; no *Sirree!* My poor old mother, God bless her, she's gone now; she used to make me kneel down by her side o' nights when I was a little shaver, and she used to say in her soft good voice, 'Never tell a lie, my son.'"

"But telling one for a friend, is not swearing to one Tolly."

"No, it is not the same," he replied, hesitatingly.

"Not at all, it's done every day."

"The more's the pity; but what am I to do?"

"There is no lie in the case. I do not know that there will be any part for you to act at all; I may have to send you away, maybe not; but you will be well paid, and you must do what you have to perform well, for the other side will employ the best counsel."

"Of course they will; but where will I have to go to?"

"To France, maybe."

"To France! why—why I speak French as well as I do Turkish, ha, ha! but that's a good one. And for what?"

"I can not tell you yet, Billy," returned Talbot, who saw that he had gone far enough. "I will have to study on it."

"Very well, Tolly, through fire or water, it's the same to me; here's to you. I wish I had to start to-morrow; only say the word, and I am off, you know that when I am under a promise I never fail."

"Yes, but you talk too loud;—you are attracting the attention of every body in the room; come and let us walk out, and I will tell you more." Then rising and settling with the barkeeper, he drew Stamp's arm through his own, and they left the room.

Down the street they walked, arm in arm, Talbot studying in what way to bind his companion to him in such a manner that he could not retract; and he in a half drunken state, leaning heavily on Talbot's arm, with visions of wine and women floating in an indistinct manner through his mind. They walked on and turned down into a broad street; a handsome row of

trees occupied the center; they passed over and found themselves under the frowning arch of a church.

"Billy," said Talbot, as they seated themselves upon the cold stone steps; "this is a matter which requires all our thoughts, and although it may seem premature to give it such attention now, I believe it is the best to be prepared and have every thing understood beforehand; it is no boy's play, but a struggle for wealth and power; a something which we have at a distance seen at a sublime height years ago, and never expected in reality to reach. Such a situation is now offered to us as will insure to us the extent of our desires the remainder of our life. The next question is, will you join me and stand by me, or have you any scruples?"

"No, Tolly! I have told you I would pack my trunk and start right away, if you want me."

"Well, that is right; listen! We are all actuated by self-interest, every one is for himself—here in this great city as every where else; the big merchants they swindle the poor devils of planters; they again crowd the negroes; the lawyers, they keep difficulties alive, while the doctors pray for cholera and yellow fever; and thus it is all around; even here in *this* building, which every Sunday resounds to the song of praise, even *its* high priest talks for glory and self-interest; the doctrine is 'Let God take care of the rich, the poor can take care of themselves.'"

"I think you ought to have studied for the ministry, Tolly, you are a pretty good talker."

"Pshaw! listen to me; I wish you to swear here on the steps of this holy building; we will then understand each other. If you will aid me in every

manner, and implicitly obey without hesitation, *any* request I may make, I will divide with you. There are two young girls in the case. They are in Paris, and if we ever get possession I will have power over them. You shall have *one* of them, and a portion of the property. Will you join me?"

Stamps had listened; he was now sobered by the walk and the cool air; he arose.

"Tolly, you have got me on a weak point; keep *your* promise to me, and *I* will be faithful to you. Yes!" he continued, "I swear by the memory of my old gray-headed mother, to be true to you, even at the sacrifice of my own life."

"Only swear in that manner!" cried Talbot, rising, and facing him closely, "only swear in that manner, and then we will ratify the bargain, and divide the spoil; for the time is not distant when he will be laid with his fathers, the death mark is on his brow."

"I do, I do!" answered he. His friend answered not a word, but stretched forth his hand and grasped the other: he held it a moment—the contract was formed.

A few evenings after saw Talbot in close and confidential conversation with an attorney. He occupied a little, low, dingy, dirty office in an obscure street. Talbot had thought it was now time to seek legal advice; he was determined not to commit himself in any manner, and had sought the acquaintance of Josiah Hiver, Esquire, for the purpose of consulting him, and candidly made a true statement of the whole affair.

This Hiver was the very man of all others whom he should have sought. Kicked from the bar in the

North, he lived here in this den, but gained considerable notoriety from ever being the champion of the prosecutor. Low and sordid in his own tastes, he comprehended all which Talbot required at once; and by the present payment of a fee, swore to remain faithful, and be on hand when he was wanting.

"If the facts are borne out by an examination, sir," he answered, "I can not apprehend any difficulty at all. The children can not inherit, that is certain, for what says the law." Here he turned over the leaves of a large folio and read: "Illegitimate children can not claim the rights of legitimate children. But if they were legitimated by a subsequent marriage, there would be no obstacle to their heirship—do you see?"

"I do!"

"Well, when there are no legitimate children and no descendants, the natural children may inherit one third to one fourth of the estate; or, they claim alimony, *provided* they are acknowledged; now, in this case there is no acknowledgment?"

"None at all, I am confident."

"Where are these children now?"

"In France," he answered, and then added—

"I have neglected to say to you, from all I have learned, that the mother of these girls was a *Quadroon*, and a *slave*."

"The devil! Well, that alters the whole case, for if the children of this woman are not slaves also, then you can eat me, sir! they are slaves sir, and as such can not inherit. You as the nearest heir come in you claim the administration, take charge of the property, and dictate your own terms. I would claim them, sir! claim *them*; they are *your* property; the

law will hear you out; all right as a trivet, sir! Mother was never manumitted previous to her death! She died a slave; the children follow the condition of the mother. But if she was manumitted we will find it out. We must move cautious in this matter; the estate is large, and there will probably be high counsel employed on the other side."

"I do not believe that there will be any thing done; but we must, as you say, not move in the dark."

"Yes, yes; you are right, but there may be some lien or tacit mortgage on it. Keep dark. How long can the present incumbent possibly last?"

"I think not over two months."

"Probably not over as many weeks, eh?"

The light burned dimly in that little office. There sat those two black-hearted villains, like ravenous vultures, preparing to pounce down upon the kind and good, who lay upon a bed of sickness, calmly passing away to the tomb. There they sat. The one with his sharp and peaked nose, his high, uneven forehead, his shaven temples and pursed mouth; the other, with all the cunning of a fiend, and the avarice of a miser, plotting the ruin of two innocent girls, and coolly calculating the death of such a man as Ormond. But, poor fellow! you were good, and pure, and dreamed it not. Much more conversation ensued of the same import. Talbot well knew that he had a great stake to play for, and determined not to lose it by an ill-advised move. He knew there would be opposition, but his own knowledge convinced him that it would be useless to struggle with him; for the law itself, in fault of other heirs, would sanction his inheritance; and he was now preparing to prove the

daughters of his friend were not capable of inheriting. His designs on the girls, now grown up to womanhood, were not developed in his own mind; being of a sensual disposition, he held female virtue in such low estimation that he fully believed that if they knew they were dependent on his bounty, they could be easily forced to yield to his wishes. Ah! little knew he the strength of female virtue. He at the same time intended to act falsely toward Stamps; and as soon as he found no more use for him, to cut adrift and let him float away.

He very soon after the above scene with Hiver, visited Ormond, who was still at the hotel; he did so with a view of actually ascertaining the condition of his victim. He went with the philosophic indifference of a surgeon who incises deeply the diseased member, seemingly unconscious of the agonizing pain he is inflicting. He went with the calmness of a savant who goes to examine some new specimen; thus went he to ascertain the physical condition of Ormond, and to speculate on the length of time he would be kept out of the property. But he came with strong expressions of pity and consolation upon his lips.

Talbot had formed a very strong and favorable impression upon the mind of Pierre, by liberal presents and conversations with him, while residing there; and as Ormond now returned home, he promised to visit him at an early day, hoping to retain Pierre in his employ, and give him some items.

He kept his promise. Ormond was fast sinking. He saw Pierre privately, and informed him of the state of his master's health; and then slipping some money into his hand, he charged him to lay hold of, and keep,

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all papers of whatever kind he saw, to give to him when he came up again; and promised him his freedom if ever he came into possession of the property.

As day by day rolled on, he looked for the death of his benefactor, and with feverish anxiety glanced over the address of every letter which came into the office; and eagerly read over the deaths in every morning paper. He had further conversations with his lawyer, and strolled about the street at night with Stamps, exciting his imagination with the description of pleasures he never intended to allow him to participate in; and training his mind to a fit state for the perpetration of any crime.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Keep silence daughter of frivolity, for Death is in that chamber."

IT was evident to Ormond, and to his friends also, that he was rapidly declining. That once full form, robust in health, rich in pride of handsome and matured manhood, was now thin and weak. That step, once so proud and firm, was now tottering and vacillating, and he trembled as if age had suddenly come over him. His breath was quick and short, and his eye sparkled with fatal brilliancy. He occupied the time mostly in reading books of a devotional character; but he had always exhibited a partiality for newspapers, and he indulged in this even now. He sat in a large cane-chair in the front gallery, gazing at the negroes at work in the field; and many was the tear which was dropped, and heavy sigh that was heaved, as they passed. His constant companion, however, was poor Marie's prayer-book; and often bitter tears would fall upon the pages as he saw some well-remembered passage, or viewed with a sad heart a turned down leaf, where she had wept and prayed. Sometimes he would receive the visit of a neighbor, and listen listlessly to his conversation; but all his friends, from feeling, studiously avoided any allusion to his situation.

But he noticed their looks of sympathy, their words

of cheerfulness, when he saw in them *no hope* ! There was a clergyman in the neighborhood who frequently came to see him. He was a good and pure man, and their conversations frequently turned upon religious subjects. He would freely speak of religion in the abstract, for he had ever been a moral man, and respected the laws of God, but he would listen to no sectarian principles.

“My friend,” he said, one day, as the conversation turned toward baptism, and some particular points of faith, “no more of that, I know, I feel that my allotted time on earth is short, I have lived out my days in peace; and have never to my knowledge done injury to man. My sins are those of omission; I die, I hope a Christian and a gentleman. I embrace no creed, for I have faith in the atoning blood of a dying Saviour, I have tried to be a just man;

“ ‘Prayers now extorted may be vain
The hour of mercy past——’

At all events, I have ever believed in the mercy and love of God to his children, and into His hands will I submit my case.”

A fit of coughing interrupted him, and he fell back in pain. The minister was a sensible man, and a good one, and he saw Ormond was right.

One evening, just before sunset, as he was reclining in his easy-chair, with his head thrown back, gazing upward at the gorgeous clouds, as they were piled in the west, his mind was sad, for his thoughts were of his almost orphan children, a step was heard in the gallery; a hand was gently laid upon his arm; he

turned his head; it was Herndon; a quick flush shot over his features. "Why—how—did you?" was all he could gasp out, as he extended both hands.

"I heard you were ill; dying, I left my business and hastened to be with you;" and here his heart grew full, he leaned on his friend's breast, and the tears welled forth freely. Oh, it is a touching thing to see the strong man bowed in grief, to see the convulsive heaving of a manly breast, and know that heart is wrung by a terrible agony. But it does no shame to the heart of such a man; he can weep and be a man still.

Herndon had received a letter from Mr. Hall, who apprised him of Ormond's situation. With a sorrowful heart he at once left for Louisiana.

Herndon now remained constantly with his friend; he only staid at home long enough to his give orders, and then return to Ormond.

Days came and went, and Herndon remained in close attendance on his companion. As often as he saw him, he would make up his mind to speak to him of his affairs and of his trip to Martinique—as he actually knew nothing of what the reader is aware, for he left previous to their return—but when he looked at the calm clear eye of his friend, and noticed his look of quiet contentment, a tear would dim his own.

The only thing which ever passed between them on the subject, was one day when he had been playing chess with him, which he often did as a relaxation, he said,

"Herndon, when I am gone, you will find a package directed to you, and one for my children. The one for yourself contains my last wishes; I count upon

you as a friend, and call upon you as a dying man to see them carried out."

Herndon arose and took his hand ; his lip trembled as he replied,

"Command me, dear Ormond, in every thing."

"Nay, nay, my friend," said he, with a half tear and a smile ; "one would think it was you who were dying, instead of myself ; don't look so sorrowful." And the tears would gush into the eyes of his faithful friend, and he had to turn away to hide them.

"Another thing, Herndon," he said, when he had sat a few moments, as if absorbed in a reverie ; "I may be eccentric, but it is my wish : lay me in the garden under the shade of the old oaks, where she and myself have so often sat ; and then, my friend, I wish her body brought from below, and under those spreading branches, place it by my own. Will you promise me this ?"

"Enough, enough, Ormond, in the name of God ; yes—have done—you shall be obeyed ;" and he raised his hands and pressed them on his breast, as if seeking relief from some great internal pains.

Ormond never again alluded to his approaching dissolution, but sat and awaited the coming of the destroyer with fortitude and resignation. He often spoke of Grant in the most affectionate manner. The servants all seemed anxious to be doing something for his comfort, and frequently stopped on their way to work, to say a kind word to massa. Old Sally visited him daily, and generally with some little thing which she had concocted for him. She would talk to him by the hour, and sometimes even make him smile at her earnest manner and odd conceits

"Never mind, massa, de Lord He is good, and I knows dat when de spring comes, and de flowers and de mocking-birds a singin' around, den you will be well agin; keep good heart, massa."

"No, no, Aunt Sally," he replied, "when the spring comes, and the flowers and birds, your poor master will lie low, with the grass waving green over him."

"Now de Lord knows, it nuff to make me mad to hear you talk so; it's a shame; you only got a bad cold, and will soon get well."

A few more days, and Ormond grew weaker, and thinner. He had no strength left now, and had to be drawn into the gallery by Pierre, whom he kept about him, as he was a good nurse. He received his friends with a calm smile of pleasure; he tried, while they were present, to divert their minds from his situation, and conversed in a low steady tone on different subjects. But the time was fast drawing nigh when the debt must be paid, and that noble head be bowed; he grew still weaker and thinner, but his eye retained its fire, and his mind its tone. He bore his pain so nobly and so uncomplainingly. All who visited him, breathed an atmosphere of sorrow, which surrounded him like a halo. Thus it was among friends; but in the silence of his lonely chamber, would he give vent to his feelings; there would he sit and gaze passionately for hours, at a miniature of Marie, and his thoughts would go back to her,

"Not lost but gone before."

And his orphan children too, they were remembered, and then would his bosom swell and his sorrowing

heart seem fit to burst, at their unprotected situation. He would bury his face in his hands, and the tears would burst through, and trickle down his emaciated fingers, while low moans would escape from his over-charged bosom.

Then a little bell would sound, a servant enter, and administer to him the opiate which solaced him, and eased his terrible cough.

The prostrating power of the disease was more evident daily, and it was plainly to be seen that it would soon be over. Before he became so weak, he was one night sitting writing, Pierre was at the window nodding. He finished, and sealing the package, exclaimed.

"Pierre!" The negro stood before him.

"Your master will soon be no more, Pierre, and I want you as you love him, listen."

"Yes, sir."

"When I am dead, you will take this paper bundle, Pierre, and give it to Mr. Herndon. Let no one but him have it; it is important to the interests of your young mistresses. You are faithful, Pierre, and would not deceive your dying master. You love them, Pierre?"

"Yes, massa; me nuss 'em long ago."

"Well, take it then, place it in the locked drawer of the secretary there; there is the key, and be very careful when all is over to do as I have requested you."

"Yes, massa; me gwine to do jest as you tells me."

Ormond handed the negro the package, and saw him lock it in the drawer as he had directed, which, when he had done, he deposited the key in a wafer-box on the table.

It was some ten days afterward, he was too weak to rise, and lay on his couch propped up with pillows. It was about twelve o'clock at night, and all was still. Ormond was sleeping sweetly, and lay like an infant taking its rest. Pierre now determined to obtain possession of the papers, which he knew Talbot would pay well for. He entered the room; a servant sat on a trunk, leaning against the wall, fast asleep; he trod softly; he looked at his master, who lay there unconscious of the foul wrong about to be done to his unhappy children. No feeling of pity found its way to the hardened negro's heart; no emotion of sorrow stirred in his breast, as he turned and gazed at the attenuated form of the good, kind master and friend; one who had never put a stripe on him, and who had overlooked many a fault; whose whole life had been to him one kind action. He started, as Ormond moaned in his sleep uneasily. He approached the servant to see if he were sleeping also; his deep, regular breathing assured him. He grasped the candle, and approached his master's side; he looked at the workings of his countenance; he was evidently dreaming of happier days, and as the remembrance floated through his mind, the large tears slowly burst through the closed eyelids, and rolled down his cheeks, wetting the pillow. But no remorse filled the soul of the black demon; he saw his master was asleep, and having softly unlocked the drawer, abstracted the paper, and, replacing the key, swiftly left the room.

"Marie, dearest!" sighed Ormond, as the negro disappeared, "I have found you at last; this is heaven now!"

"I will soon be gone, Herndon," he said one even-

ing, as that gentleman sat by his bedside, and had to lean over and put his ear close to the lips of the speaker to distinguish his words, so weak was he.

"God bless you, my poor friend!" he replied, as he pressed his hand, and his voice was tremulous with emotion.

"If Grant ever returns," he again whispered, "tell him I loved him to the last, and give my love to him."

Herndon, seeing how swiftly he was sinking, determined to remain at his side until it was all over, which he foresaw would not be long.

The next evening he ordered the servant to remain in his master's chamber, and to call him on the slightest movement. Ormond had, under the influence of opiates, sunk into a sweet and tranquil slumber. He seemed entirely free from pain. Herndon had not slept a moment the night before, and laid down, but he could not sleep; he arose and walked to the window, gazing out. The moon was there, riding high in the heavens, unconscious of the joys and sorrows she revealed with her mellow light, and the stars hung out their silver lamps, bright and clear. The mocking-bird was among the topmost boughs of the live-oaks in the garden, making the air vibrate with its sweet, wild melody; the tinkle of the melancholy cow-bell was heard in the distance, and the cricket's chirp sounded loud and distinct. All nature seemed smiling sweetly, though sad. But a dark, heavy mass of clouds hung low in the south, and the wind commenced piping through the trees; the clouds gathered thicker and darker, and the shutters flapped heavily against the side of the house a moment after-

ward. Herndon was restless and uneasy, and threw himself again upon the bed in the adjoining room, but not to sleep, for he believed that in this commotion of the elements the soul of Ormond would pass away. Again he entered the sick chamber; he softly walked to the bedside. The patient seemed to be sleeping calmly, but there was a change on his countenance; he saw it. The eyes had assumed a deeper place in the orbit; the face was covered with a cold and clammy perspiration, and was fast assuming that cadaverous hue so peculiar. Alas! poor Ormond: it was the herald of death! the bony monster was visible, tangible. Herndon hastily awoke the negro who was sleeping in a chair, and bade him go and call the doctor, who was below, and also arouse the overseer, who had remained in the house that night at his request.

Again he was at the bedside; the physician came up in a few moments; he also gazed at the sleeper, and pressing his finger lightly on the pulse, sadly raised his eyes toward Herndon. There was sorrow in that glance; it needed no words; there was a confirmation of his worst fears.

“How long do you think he will last, doctor?”

“Not over a few hours; he may live until daylight, but not longer,” was the reply.

“There he lay, with the impress
Indelible, Death’s image on his brow.”

He dispatched servants around among Ormond’s nearest friends, who readily obeyed the summons.

Through the long watches of the night did that group of mourners stand around the couch of the true-

hearted Ormond, and many were the tears dropped as they gazed at the noble figure lying in the tyrant's grasp.

The wind without had risen greatly, and an awful storm was careering in its might and power; and the blast, it shrieked and howled; and the trees groaned and quivered in their awful contest with the demon of the tempest. Vivid flashes of lightning were seen bursting from the bosom of the black cloud, to rend the heavens, while the rain in torrents deluged the earth. It was a fearful night, and as the thunder roared in majesty, human beings cowered and shrank with fear.

But the storm passed off, the wind sank into low, sobbing murmurs, as if in grief, and the dawn opened clear and beautiful. He still lived, still sleeping away the little remnant of time which remained to him; yet he slept, passing to the deeper and profounder sleep, which knows no waking.

Several gentlemen now occupied the room. The morning light was shut out by curtains, and a dim twilight pervaded it. The shadow of death had settled on all around.

He awoke, and, gazing around with a fast glazing eye at his friends, who gathered to the bedside, murmured,

"At last, the destroyer has come!"

"God's will be done!" exclaimed the deep voice of the minister, who had arrived, "and praised be His holy name!"

"Amen!" responded Ormond, fervently; which was echoed by each one.

"It is dark," he whispered.

"Will you have more light?" was asked.

A look of assent being given, the curtains were lifted, and the light streamed into the apartment.

The negroes had assembled around the door outside, and were all clamorous for admittance. At his request it was opened, and they came thronging in. He was too weak to talk, but stretched out his hand to all. As some favorite servant came up, and, seizing his weak hand, wept piteously over it; he gently smiled. They gathered closer. Some fell on their knees, and wept aloud; while others kissed the pale hand, and strode out of the room to indulge their grief elsewhere.

All were gone, and he turned his dying eyes to the circle of sorrowful friends gathered around him; his eye brightened, and he made an effort to extend to them his hand. Herndon propped him up with pillows. First one friend, and then another came, and pressed his hand. They were all too much filled with sorrow to say "Farewell;" but slowly, silently, and sadly, they stepped back. Others now take his thin hand, but they can not say "Adieu!" He falls back exhausted on his pillow, from which he had slightly raised his head.

Sobs are heard from many; stifled, it is true, but noble, manly yielding to nature.

His eyes now turn on Herndon: they speak of love and peace. He approaches his friend, and, taking both his hands, kneels by the couch; he presses them to his bosom, which rises and heaves as a tumultuous sea, and the tears flow in big, scalding drops. But again he rises, and as he places his hand on Ormond's brow, he whispered, "It is come!" and sinks lower down on his pillow, his grasp relaxes, the eyes slowly

close, and, like a zephyr's breath, or the soft note of some gentle spirit wandering from its sphere, the breath leaves him, and he is dead.

"It is all over!" said the clergyman, as he solemnly turned to depart. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Close we now the curtains. The Almighty has taken to the spirit's home the soul which He gave. He has called back a noble, generous, and just being. He rests in peace,

"Mid holy prayers, and generous grief, and consecrating blessings."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust?
Or Flattery soothe the dull, cold ear of Death?"

GRAY.

THE funeral came, with its solemn pageants, its gloomy forms, its grief, and then all was over.

They laid the honored dead beneath the spreading branches of the noble oak, whose grateful shade had so often sheltered him and his in happier days. There, where the rank grass grew around him, and the banks of violets, and the clematis, breathing soft perfume, as the mournful wind sighed through the limbs; and the little bird warbled melody—he rested, after his weary pilgrimage was over.

When a proper period had elapsed, and Herndon could nerve himself to revisit those scenes which were fraught with so much emotion, he sought the dwelling of his late friend, and, with an officer of the law, placed a seal upon all papers and valuables. In vain they searched the house for the package which Ormond had mentioned as bearing the address of Herndon; and, when masses of documents had been overhauled, and the negroes questioned concerning it, and it did not appear, they came to the conclusion that he had neglected it.

"The property will be administered on?"

"I presume so, of course," replied Herndon.

"Who will administer?"

"I know not."

"Would not you, as an intimate friend, be the most suitable person to take out letters?"

"It will be quite impossible for me to do it. I have my hands full, and may be called to New York any day, on business which must not be neglected."

"Who else is there?"

"No one, except Hall."

"Are there no relatives besides his children?"

"None, save a person by the name of Talbot, who resides in New Orleans; and I would make every opposition in my power to prevent the administration being given to him. I would dislike to see him lord it over this property. Although, if he makes an application for it, there may be no way of preventing him from obtaining it; and the only hope is, that he may fail in giving security. I fear we shall have trouble with him. He may also, as the nearest of kin, be appointed curator to the children."

"There was some talk, a few years ago," remarked the officer, "that it was not quite right between Ormond and his wife. Is there any truth in it?"

Herndon colored up a moment; his eyes flashed at the lightness with which it was spoken; but he remembered it was a matter of public notoriety, and that every one did not have the same feelings for his departed friend as filled his bosom. He therefore replied, calmly, "The matter I dread, is that this person, Talbot, will be really entitled to the property, as the nearest collateral heir, unless Ormond has had an act of manumission passed, and legalized his mar-

riage, which I very much fear he has neglected. He left home with the intention of doing so; God grant he has done it; for in that manner alone can his children inherit. In the other case, the property will go to this man."

"Did the colonel never mention to you the fact of this intention?"

"Certainly; it was a frequent conversation between us; and he left for the West Indies for the purpose of taking action in the matter; but alas! all are gone who accompanied him: two are dead, and one, Dr. Grant, if living, is in some foreign country; for I have not heard of him since the death of his wife; and I feel convinced that if Ormond had really done any thing, we would have known it. Now, it may be possible that Dr. Grant has communicated something of the matter to his father-in-law, Mr. Hall."

"You know if there can not be some proof found in regard to it, that it will be very plain, and almost useless to contest it."

"I am aware of that; oh! Ormond, my friend, to what a situation you have reduced those dear children by your only fault, procrastination; noble and pure in all else, you have fearfully neglected their interests."

"It is a great pity that the children should be thus cut out by this upstart. Is there no means to secure a portion at least for them?"

"Only by the liberality of the heir, unless Ormond did enfranchise his wife. In any other case, the girls are totally in his power. Why, oh! why did I not speak out, and learn all before he died!"

"It may be that he has intrusted the papers to

some one in the city: his merchant, perhaps, or the bank where he kept his account."

Herndon brightened up at this idea. "God bless you for that suggestion!" he said. And he determined to go at once to the city, and make a thorough examination, and not to give it up until it was folly to hope longer.

They mounted their horses. Herndon turned and looked back at the house; thoughts of sadness filled his bosom. "Oh! what a change has come over this once happy home," exclaimed he. "Where are the cheerful faces which made this dwelling light with joy; they are gone, and desolation reigns over all!" He cast one look toward Ormond's grave, and dashing a tear from his eye, quickly rode after his companion, who had gone on before. "But Ormond!" he cried with emphasis; "I will work for your delay! and by the God who judges us all, if your children can be righted I will do it; and if they can not, they shall be mine and have a home with me!"

"You are a noble fellow!" exclaimed the notary, in admiration; "but you know, Herndon, that if Ormond never did free his wife and children, they are incapable of inheriting, and are still slaves."

Herndon turned, and his eyes glared with rage at the bare thought. "Let him only dare to breathe that, and I will put things to rights at once, and a coffin shall cover his unworthy remains."

The notary advised him to apply at once for letters on the estate, which he did that evening. He then rode over to the father-in-law of Dr. Grant, to seek some information. The doctor did not reside with his wife's parents, but near them; he thought it possible

that they knew something concerning their trip to the West Indies; but no!—when they returned, the extreme illness of Mrs. Grant had shut out all things else of lesser importance, and he had never mentioned any thing of Colonel Ormond's affairs in connection with the trip.

He was foiled by fate again, but had the pleasure of learning that a letter had been received from him a few weeks before; he was then in St. Petersburg, and was *en route* for Vienna. Herndon sat down and wrote a letter to each of the large cities where Grant had resided, apprising him of the death of Ormond, and begging him to return at once, to assist him in righting the children of their friend.

He at the same time wrote a letter to Zoe and Estelle, detailing all that had occurred, and ended by offering a home to them when they returned.

He then sat the entire night on the bank of the river alone; and it was only during the next day, that a steamer came by, and he was enabled to obtain a passage to the city.

Oh, Talbot, my friend! look sharp, for you have an active and vigilant enemy abroad; he is aroused, and blood-hound like, will return again and again on the track, and earth you at last. He is a man of work, and will leave no stone unturned to upset your designs; be careful, or you will fall.

Herndon stood upon the guards of the boat; she passed Ormond's place; he looked fondly upon the now tenantless homestead; the doors and windows closed, and not a living thing to be seen.—Yes there was; it was Ormond's riding horse, a noble bay who was cropping disconsolately in the front yard, ever

and anon raising his finely-formed head; and with pointed ears watching, and wondering seemingly, why the favorite hand caressed him not.

Upon arriving in the city he lost no time in making diligent inquiries, but could find no clew to guide him.

Ormond's factors, nor the bank, had any papers in charge; and he visited in rotation every notary's and record office, but to no purpose. He then sat down to quietly await the issue of events, determining in his own mind to struggle for the children as long as there was a "peg to hang a hope upon," and then to appeal to the manhood and generosity of Talbot.

We said that he visited the office of every notary; so he did, but there was the ruins of a building then smoking and moldering away, as he passed it. Oh! had he known that here was the office where his friend had inscribed his name, and delivered his children from bondage. This was the office; it burned last night; the records were partly consumed, and what were not were carried off by a thoughtless crowd. Alas! poor orphans!

The papers duly chronicled the demise of Ormond, and it instantly caught the eye of Talbot.

"Now has the game to be boldly played," he said, while a flush of excitement passed over his face; and he rapidly strode over the pavement in the direction of the office of Hiver.

"Well, sir!" he exclaimed breathlessly, as he rushed into the den, and into the presence of the worthy attorney, who was engaged in red-taping a quantity of papers; "the game has commenced, and you must be ready to accompany me."

"What? eh?" he exclaimed, smacking his mouth and chewing his tobacco violently, while the filthy juice coursed in a stream down from each corner of his mouth.

"Has the old gentleman earthed himself at last?"

"At last! at last! and I have lost no time in calling on you, I intend applying at once for letters on the estate."

"Ah, exactly sir, exactly. Well, there is but one way, sir; and that is as you say—to go up at once—be in time, and apply for letters. You will be put in possession, and you know that possession gives title."

"You think that I have the best right to administer?"

"Think! of course. You are the nearest legal heir; they can't keep you out of it at all. We will do every thing according to law; and then, you see, no advantage can be taken of us. I am a law-abiding man, sir; indeed, I may say that it is my meat and drink. Ha, ha! Well, sir, I am ready to accompany you when you will."

"Very good; then meet me in three hours in the bar room of the —— Hotel."

"Good, I am there. I have a friend to see, with whom I have a little business, when I go away."

"Think well on it, Hiver, and don't let us commit ourselves."

"Bah! I have not been in law for twenty years to make a *faux pas* now. I will put you straight, if you will only keep so." As Talbot turned to go out, he called after him. "Ah! I say, that was a very lucky fire night before last! Ha, ha, ha! wasn't it? every paper and book burned up, and the last evidence destroyed against you. Surely the gods befriend you."

"The devil, perhaps," said Talbot, bitterly.

"Maybe so, maybe so!" laughed Hiver, "but it was a little remarkable, was it not? It saved us a world of trouble; but we will make a good thing of it."

Talbot walked off.

"The crafty old villain," he muttered; "we will make a good thing of it. Yes, we will; but I will take good care that you don't make much out of it; let me get into possession once, and I'll soon cut clear of you. All you want is to get me into your toils, and have a fat pigeon to pluck; but maybe you will."

Hiver stood in his dingy office; and, as he watched the receding form of Talbot, he bent his brows, exclaiming, "The upstart! he already assumes airs; he is a rascal, and would just as soon rob an orphan, or burn a will, as not; he is timid and suspicious. I'll watch him; for as soon as he gets into possession, he would just as soon drop me as a hot horse-shoe, and pick up some of our fashionable lawyers up town; but I'll keep him in check, and feather my nest any how."

Such was the opinion of two great rascals of each other.

Talbot hastens up town; he calls at his place of business; states to his employer the fact of the death of his relation, and of his intention to administer on the estate. They accepted his resignation. Stamps, at his request, followed suit. To a clothing-store they then repaired, and fitted themselves out in a suit of black; and, as the hour drew near, sought the appointment with Hiver, whom they found awaiting them.

Not many hours elapsed before they were steaming up the Mississippi. Talbot already felt his importance; and as he puffed his cigar, and sported a large

gold-headed cane on deck, he cast a look of supercilious contempt on all around.

"Well, we should make a pretty thing of it now, if there were a paper to be drawn on us in open court, enfranchising the wife and children," exclaimed Hiver.

"Don't conjure up phantoms, Hiver; there is no danger of that. I have heard conversations enough to satisfy myself."

Hiver, crafty and unprincipled, gave him many useful hints as to the course to be pursued, and placed him in a safe position in regard to the succession. Poor Stamps! he was overjoyed; and felt as if he owned all Louisiana. He stood on the guards, and every now and then asked Talbot in a loud voice, "Is our plantation any thing like that one?" pointing to some handsome residence. This mortified Talbot excessively, who took Stamps aside, and represented to him the ridicule to which he was exposing himself. Stamps promised amendment; and kept his word while Talbot was present; but as soon as he had walked off, he was describing our plantation to a company of strangers, and gave many an invitation to stop. He grew very vivacious, drank freely, and every stranger who would drink with him shared his generosity. He even got down among the deck hands, and treated several of them.

At last the well-known place was brought in view, and Talbot felt some queer emotions, which he could not account for.

Upon reaching the plantation, Talbot took possession, and installed himself in the dwelling. It was evening, but the overseer at once dispatched a messenger for Mr. Herndon; who came at the summons,

and proceeded to the house. In the gallery he met Talbot, whose countenance fell when he saw him. There was evident restraint on his part, when he greeted Herndon, whose lip was compressed, and whose brow lowered. He was at first furious; but upon second thoughts, he calmed himself as well as he could.

"Mr. Talbot," he observed, after a long silence; "I learn that you come to take possession of this property?"

"That was my intention, sir," he answered, but in evident agitation.

"It appears that you are acting under advice, sir. I presume that you come prepared with ample proof that you are really the relation of Colonel Ormond?"

"He was my cousin, by my mother's side," he answered, averting his eyes; "he always acknowledged me as his relation, and I do not see that any one is called to dispute it."

"Sir," replied Herndon, sternly; "I was the dear friend of Ormond; we were more than usually intimate. I loved him; a nobler or purer man never lived. If you are the relation of my deceased friend, you must substantiate that fact; and, sir, until you do, you can not claim any thing here. If you ever do own a slave on this place, you must do it under the sanction of the law; and, if you try to take any advantage of your situation, you shall answer to me personally."

"I will protect the interests of my client," exclaimed Hiver.

"And who the deuce are you, sir?" asked Herndon, with a glance of supreme disdain.

"I am the attorney, sir, of my friend, Mr. Talbot, who has done me the honor of selecting me from the bar of New Orleans; and we desire nothing but what is fair and right."

"I will see that you have it, sir."

"The children of Colonel Ormond can not inherit—they are illegitimate; and, if you examine the law, you will find that I am correct. At least, we will try it on that ground, for they never have been acknowledged. They can not even claim alimony; and, if report speaks true, they could not inherit even were there no legal heir—they have never been even emancipated."

"I am obliged to you for your information," said Herndon, bitterly; "I do not know if it is as you represent; but I will know. I am aware that Ormond left here for the purpose once; and I assure you that I will move heaven and earth to see the orphans righted. I advise you, Mr. Talbot, to be very cautious in your actions; for this matter has to be taken into court; and I shall contest your claim."

"We do not fear you on a fair trial," said Hiver; "and we defy you or any one else to uptrip us."

"Did I speak to you, sir?" replied Herndon, casting a withering look of rebuke and contempt, upon the abashed lawyer; who timidly stammered, "N—n—no sir."

"Well, then, wait until I do. Mr. Talbot, I see you have had advisers. I shall not take any advantage of you; and I only hope, if you are successful in defrauding the orphan children of your benefactor, that you will, at least, act magnanimously."

Talbot was about to reply, when Hiver quickly in-

terposed, "No—no, sir! I can not allow my client to commit himself in any manner."

"Miserable puppy!" cried Herndon, his eyes shining like those of an enraged tiger, "I have half a mind to kick you from the gallery. If the man had a noble thought, you would blight it with your poisonous breath."

"If you were to offer violence to me, I would commence an action against you."

"Confound your action," he answered, "keep silence in my presence."

"Mr. Talbot, you can not remain here, as you ought to have known. I will not have the dwelling of *my* friend polluted and even the sound of your blackguardism, echoing over his newly made grave."

"Mr. Herndon," he answered at a wink from Hiver, "I desire nothing but justice; if I gain the case, no man shall reproach me for a want of generosity. I loved Ormond, and the tears I have shed are not few. I shall take no liberty but with your consent. I will quietly remain here until the decision of the suit, if there is one commenced; but I believe you will think better of it; you are much mistaken in me, sir."

"God grant it," he said fervently, "the law will decide it, but as for staying *here*, that is out of the question. Why, the very corpse of Ormond would rise and walk in its shroud, at such desecration; no, sir, you must leave here in the morning."

Having spoken this with a determined air, he stepped from the gallery, mounted his horse, and rode away with dignity.

"There goes a determined fellow," said Hiver, "and one who should be propitiated; but we are safe, and he

knows it. When a man begins to talk of a compromise, and being generous, his case is bad."

"Well, all I hate is that we have to leave such comfortable quarters," exclaimed Stamps, "where in thunder can we stay?"

"Down at ——," replied Talbot. "I tell you, I can't enjoy myself here now. I am all the time thinking how often I have seen Ormond here in this gallery, and I almost expect to hear his voice every moment now. I can see him all the time, as he used to look; and, when Herndon spoke of his walking in his shroud the very flesh crept on my bones. No, no, we will go down to —— in the morning, and get a good comfortable place to stay until we get the letters."

"And then take possession," said Hiver, "that's the way to do it."

A walk was now proposed over the estate. We will not attempt a description of the feelings of Talbot, as they roamed over the wide domain, and viewed the fields of waving cane, the product of which might be all his own. He remembered when he first came, a beggar, now in a situation to dispute possession.

"Truly this is a splendid property," exclaimed Hiver, as they once more entered the yard on their return; "and one to battle bravely for."

Each echoed the sentiment.

Upon the death of Ormond, all the servants about the house had been placed in the field, except old Sylvia, Marie's nurse, and a few ancient negroes in the Quarter. Robert was now sent back, to pay attention to the self-made guests, and prepare for them.

It was night, and the three friends were sitting in the parlor; lights were brought in, and after the meal

was over, which none enjoyed, they again returned to the room. There was a strange uncomfortable sensation about the guests, that they could not shake off; every thing seemed so cold, dead and silent; so unlike what would be expected to be the feelings of an heir, just taking possession of a splendid estate. Around Talbot's heart, there was a cold, dead weight clinging as if the icy hands of the departed encircled it, compressed it, and was stopping its pulsations. He wished that it was daylight.

"Well if this house is not haunted," exclaimed the lawyer; "I never could believe I could be so singularly affected."

All confessed to the same feeling.

"Robert," asked Talbot, "is there not some kind of spirit here?"

"Yes, sir, plenty of it."

"Then let us have some, my good boy."

The servant retired, and in a few minutes, entered, bearing a decanter. Stamps took it, and was about to fill a glass when, he suddenly exclaimed, "It is blood."

The shock to all three was so great that they sprang to their feet, and remained looking in each other's faces in alarm.

"What is it?" asked Hiver, taking the decanter, "Why it is brandy only." No one spoke and none could drink.

Talbot walked out to the gallery. He had noticed that he had seen nothing of Pierre since his arrival, and he was now wondering where he was, as he stood leaning against the hand-rail at the end of the house. As he remained in that position, musing with his eyes

cast toward Ormond's grave, a shudder passed over his frame. At this moment he fancied he observed a movement in the shrubbery near the gate. Timid as well as very suspicious, he was about to withdraw, fearing he hardly knew what, when he heard a low whistle in the direction. He watched closely, and was about to retreat hastily when he heard his own name pronounced in a whisper. Surprise for a moment rendered him motionless; but he thought an instant, and then in a low tone asked.

"Who is there?"

"Me," was the reply.

"And who is *me*?"

"Pierre."

"Oh, Pierre; where did you come from, Pierre?"

No answer was returned; but the speaker advanced from the shadow of the evergreens, and softly came to where Talbot was standing. He drew close up to him and pulling a package from his bosom, the same he had stolen from his master's cabinet, as we have detailed, placed it in Talbot's hands. Just then Stamps came out, and with a spring Pierre threw himself over the hand-rail, and disappeared in the darkness. Talbot hastily concealed the package in his bosom.

They all retired, but not to sleep. Hiver, to study and dream of the fat fees he saw in prospect. Stamps felt that he had got a home at last, and so that he had his necessary wants supplied, and his passions gratified, he cared for little else.

No sleep visited the couch of Talbot. He had a room to himself, and when he had undressed he hung his clothes over the keyhole of the door, and drawing close the shutters, sat himself down to study. He

dared not open the package, he feared a dreadful revelation, he knew not what; he picked up a prayer-book and turned over the pages. He started with horror—there, in the well-known hand of Ormond, were these words in pencil, written on the margin of the page—“*My days are numbered. I am alone. Into Thy hands I commit my orphan children. Wilt Thou protect them, oh, God?*”

Feelings of terror took possession of his mind, and he shuddered as he thought of the wronged Ormond. This was then the room in which he died. Mayhap his spirit was then hovering over him, with vengeful looks and fearful warnings. Had the Almighty thus guided him to view the enormity of his villainy? He was almost tempted to resign all claim to the estate, and act the honest man; but then thoughts of the broad lands, with the teeming fields, which might be all his own for the extending of his hand and grasping them, came across his mind, and he arose, shook off his fears, and smiled at his own cowardice. He grasped the packet; he determined to know the worst. He examined the address; he tore off the cover, and found a letter addressed to Zoe and Estelle. With nervous agitation he opened it, and there drank in with eagerness its contents. There were burning eloquence and pathos in its tone, deep and feeling; there were sorrow and agony portrayed in those lines. Here Ormond appealed to his children by the memory of their parents, by every tie which was held sacred, by a voice from the grave, to so act that no blot should ever come on their name. There he laid bare their mother's unhappy career, and he closed with the crowning deed, which emancipated them from the

ban which had hung over them. Talbot was thunder-stricken, he trembled with terror, the paper fell from his nerveless grasp upon the floor, he seized the other package. There he found a confirmation of the fears which the other had excited. Inclosed were all the papers which had been obtained in Martinique, not even excluding the marriage certificate and a copy of the declaration of the dying woman who had so long acted as Marie's aunt. He sat like one stupified; he felt that he was on the brink of a fearful precipice, and closed his eyes; he dared not gaze over, for blackness and death were beneath him. He looked up; his eyes strained in fright. Leaping from his seat, he paced the room violently, he gasped for breath, he dared not think; turn where he would, the form of Ormond stood before him! There, with his great mild eyes, he stood the very incarnation of sorrow. The form paced the room by Talbot's side, and gazed sadly and reproachfully at him; then, assuming a threatening aspect, the orbs seemed to grow larger, and bloody with rage. Again the shape would change, and with glaring eyes and gnashing teeth, with revenge and hatred speaking in its hideous countenance, the *fiend* stood before him. There was the eye, emitting coruscations of flame, the sarcastic grin, and the deep malice of the infernal being, all before him, all palpable, all expressed. The frightened wretch sunk upon his knees, and in trembling agony exclaimed, "God save me!" He opened his eyes; he was alone; he looked shudderingly around; his flesh still crept, and his heart beat faint and slow. With a desperate energy given by despair, he hastily gathered together the papers which lay scattered over the floor, and not

even opening one which was addressed to Herndon, rushed to the fire-place. There was no fire in the hearth ; it had been carefully cleaned and whitewashed since the funeral, but he took the candle, and applied the light to the mass. He watched the flames as they curled around the last words of the noble Ormond, and smiled with a devilish satisfaction when he saw the latest spark die out, and the whole sink to a heap of black cinders. He deliberately gathered them up, and dusting the remainder off with his handkerchief, went to the window. *Fool! he had burnt only copies of the originals.*

"Here, I consign you to the winds of heaven," he said. "I defy you to return in any shape to inform on me. I am safe, safe, now!"

A deep groan answered him. He started wildly, and hastily looked around.

"I certainly heard something," he exclaimed, anxiously. "Or can it be my imagination? Cursed fool I was, to be frightened by a sound so trivial. Mayhap this is what they call *conscience*."

He then sat down, and as he thus reclined, his brain conjured up phantoms. Again the stately form of Ormond stood before him.

"Can this be reality?" asked he, as he closed his eyes, and, opening them again, found the specter before him still. This time the face wore an expression only of rage and vengeance; the brows were contracted, and the lurid light which shot from the eyes seemed to shed a lambent and unearthly glow, like a halo, around the figure. The winding-sheet hung loosely from its form, and the phantom slowly raised the right hand in a threatening attitude. Talbot's

straining eyes were riveted upon the fearful form ; his pulse seemed to cease to beat ; a cold perspiration broke out over his body ; his hair bristled ; he tried to avert his eyes, but they were fascinated by the stupefaction of horror. An owl sat near the window in a tree, the messenger-bird of Death ! whose voice of doom

“Tells of the shroud, and the cold damp tomb,
Where festering corpses lie.”

Talbot sat still—

“With listening ear, and bristling hair,
And blood in his veins that froze ;
Like a voice of doom, through that silent room,
An ominous sound arose,
A blended cry of wrath and woe,
With anguish keen and fell,
Like the wail of a soul in the pit below,
Condemned to the nethermost hell.”

As the sound arose on the midnight air, and the flesh shrunk and quivered in terror, he sprang to the door, and, hastily unlocking it, rushed from the room, alarmed and nearly bereft of his reason. Stamps, alarmed also by the sudden intrusion, as Talbot bounded into the room, leaped out of bed, and began to call aloud. This awoke Hiver, who had dropped off asleep ; he ran to the window and tried to throw it up, but the sash, being fastened down with a spring, defied his utmost efforts. He then sought to find the door, but stumbled over a chair, and fell headlong on the floor. This added to the alarm of the others, who feared a new irruption, and commenced crying out in concert. Hiver, finding matters in this fix, sneaked under the bed.

"Is this you, Billy?" cried Talbot, as he seized him by the leg.

"Yes; is that you, Tolly?"

"Yes."

"What is the matter?"

"Oh! the devil is come, Billy!"

"The devil he has! where is he?" cried Stamps, who, now that he had time to become cool and thoroughly awakened, regained his courage.

"Oh! he is in the other room, Billy!"

"There is a light there!"

"Yes, yes: shut the door."

"Tolly, it's my opinion that you are a cursed coward. What! run from the devil when you had a candle in the room? I'll go and see the old fellow;" and here he sprang off the bed, and walked into the room.

"Well, Tolly," he exclaimed, as he returned with the light, "he's gone, and I don't believe a word you say."

"I'll swear I saw and heard him."

"Pshaw! fal de lal! all gammon!"

"I'll tell you what," cried the lawyer, poking his head out from the bed, where he had sneaked when Stamps had gone for the light, "you both came mighty near catching it. I heard the noise, and was about to fire, when I distinguished your voices. As for myself, I never became alarmed. I am the coolest man you ever saw." And with this valiant lie in his mouth, he pulled the cover over his head, and addressed himself to sleep.

"Indeed!" answered Stamps, laughing; "then per-

haps you will go and take Tolly's place in the other room, and let him have your bed?"

"Thank you!" muttered Hiver, from under the bed-clothes; "not any."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"O, coward conscience, how dost thou affright us!"

THE next morning, after breakfast, our three friends reluctantly left the dwelling, and proceeded to the parish-town, which was the seat of justice. Talbot formally petitioned for the administration of the estate of Colonel Ormond, when they learned that Mr. Herndon had been on the same errand; to which they made an objection filed in writing. This was done by the advice of Hiver, who was confident of his rejection by the judge. There remained nothing now to do but to take matters quietly until the expiration of the ten days authorized by law. Hiver, in the mean time, remained with Talbot. They occupied a room at the principal hotel, where they formed acquaintances, hunted, and fished in the surrounding country, and sought to gain friends and popularity.

The ten days expired, and an early day was set for the hearing of the rival claimants. They were all there, at the office of the judge, and, as they sat, anxiously awaiting the commencement of the case, Mr. Herndon rode up. He was very pale and stern, and spoke to all with a subdued gravity. The case came on, and was argued at some length by the counsel. It was contended that there was no positive evidence to show that Talbot was Ormond's relative. To

this, Hiver replied that he, Ormond, had always acknowledged him as a relation, and that, as the nearest collateral relative, in default of any claimant in the direct line, his client was entitled to the administratorship. He then called on several persons, and Mr Herndon himself, who, on oath, testified to the accuracy of the statement. It went very hard with the judge to make the decision, but he was compelled to set aside the claims of Herndon, and Talbot was informed that he should administer the estate.

Great were the congratulations which Hiver and Stamps showered on Talbot, who took it very calmly. The next thing to be done, was to give the requisite security. This was easily done; for during the week previous, Hiver had so represented the matter, as to actually interest the sympathy of several persons in the town, who, when the bond was given, walked in without scruple, and signed it.

Thus much was completed, and nothing now remained to be done, but to have an inventory taken of the estate. The appointment of Talbot annoyed Mr. Herndon considerably. He went to the city, and consulted distinguished counsel. They could give him no hope, unless he could prove Talbot to be an impostor.

This he could not do, as he was well aware that Ormond had always recognized, and introduced him as a relative, and therefore he was entitled to the administration. Herndon was almost outdone, and he turned his face homeward with a heavy heart, to await patiently news from the only one living who could set the matter at rest. This was Dr. Grant.

The season sped on, and Talbot removed to the plantation permanently. Hiver returned to his busi-

ness in the city for the time. The newly installed *gentleman*, with his *man*, gave dinner-parties and wine-parties, or discharged one overseer and engaged another. Old Pierre was his right-hand man, but he was made to know his place; for Talbot felt tolerably certain now, that when the tug of war came, he would be pronounced the heir; and he had no more use for Pierre. He tried to gain popularity. The neighbors came, and enjoyed his hospitality; they went away with a secret feeling of dislike. There was a something—a feeling of restraint apparent in all their actions; not that frank and open-hearted demeanor which comes from a warm welcome, as in times of old. They looked upon their host with suspicion and dislike, and he felt it, but determined to outlive prejudice.

Stamps was in his glory: he drank and smoked with the guests, slapped them on the back, and called them “mighty clever fellows.” He played whist, and related, much to the horror of Talbot, many little amusing passages from their lives, while clerks in the North. When the guests were gone, Talbot would take Stamps to task; and, after a good lecture, he would promise to be more careful in future, and not to repeat the offense.

“Your tongue will be your ruin, Billy,” he said, “let our former life alone; let it lie buried; for there is nothing pleasant in the retrospect, and it only makes my visitors feel a contempt for you.”

“Well, Tolly, I don’t mean any thing; but I feel so good, to think I can do just as I choose, and that we have got plenty without clerking; but I won’t do so any more, if you will only give me a hint when you hear me going to do it.”

It was now that Talbot thought it time to act in regard to Zoe and Estelle. He would have had himself appointed curator *ad bona* to them, merely to keep them in his power, if he had not been afraid that by this act he would have made a tacit acknowledgment that the children had rights; and, if there were no tutor appointed, it would be presumptive evidence that they had no estate to administer.

"You are right," remarked Hiver; "let Herndon be appointed, if he will; but your being tutor would prevent you from ever extending your claim over them; for this may have to be done. You have got every point on your side now, but see that you don't overreach yourself; for your claim and theirs must conflict. They will then be represented by a curator *ad litem*. No, sir! don't you touch it. They may even be *natural* children, and obtain a good slice out of your estate."

It had got whispered around, somehow, that Talbot intended to contest the claim of the children through illegitimacy; and curses loud and deep were uttered by the neighbors, when they thought of the orphan girls; but they were powerless, and could do nothing.

Sometimes Talbot was determined on going on to Paris for the girls, marrying one of them, and then, feeling secure, set the world at defiance; but he thought if he did, it would not agree with his contract with Stamps, who would claim the other; and then he would have an equal right with him there. No! that would never do! He could never share that property with another. Besides, he had long determined to get rid of Stamps; he was an incubus on him, and no assistance whatever; but he intended to

use him soon, and was preparing himself. He sent funds to the Superior of the school, for Zoe and Estelle, and wrote them a kind and feeling letter, with the information that he would ever provide for them. To the Superior, he mentioned that he would ere long dispatch a friend to Paris for his cousins, and that she must prepare to lose them.

All this while Herndon was not idle—he was making inquiries in every direction—and worked night and day for the benefit of the orphans. He, however, made no discoveries. He saw with pain that the fine property was diminishing in value, from mismanagement and from the incompetency of the overseer, whom Talbot had hired; but he knew that he had no legal right to speak, and he could only sigh and wish for happier days.

He and others thought they saw in the fact that Talbot had not been appointed tutor for the girls, a disposition to defraud them entirely of their just rights, and he determined ere long, to himself apply for the tutorship of the orphans.

Talbot now occupied himself in riding about the plantation, and learning its duties. The negroes saw at first that there was a change coming over things; they missed the cheerful smile of their former kind master. They missed his gentle words—they missed many a holiday and little present. In their stead, there was the harsh voice of a frowning stranger; a round of unmitigated toil; and no cheering words of kindness ever struck their ear. Where now were their Sunday sports and recreations? Gone! and in their place was a sullen, ragged, discontented group, lounging without soul or spirit in the sun.

An important era in the life of Talbot now occurred. The account of the administration of the estate of Ormond was filed and homologated, and he was then discharged from the administratorship. Now was the trial of Talbot. He claimed the succession as the nearest heir-at-law; the proofs he brought up induced the same persons who had gone his security to still continue on his paper, and he became to all intents and purposes the presumptive heir.

Talbot was now, we may say, the lord of this princely estate. He had means at command, but was not satisfied. Nor was he happy. He was high up on the ladder of wealth, and could look down upon the world, as far as regarded gold, but the compliments of friends from the city, at his splendid reunions, when the wine flowed, jests went forth, and the sound of music awoke the midnight air, and the smiles of beauty dazzled, made no cord vibrate in his heart. He was dissatisfied and unhappy. There was a vacuum in his breast which nothing could fill. He often saw the pale face of Ormond in his musings; and the form of the gentle Marie, with her dark, sad eyes. He thought of their unprotected children. He felt that he was a villain, and that there must be a curse hanging over him.

Since the discovery of the papers—and knowing that he was holding the property unjustly—there was a constant disquiet in his bosom. He imagined and felt that there was always danger of discovery; and, although he would in calmer moments smile at his own terrors, and fondly solace himself with the idea that the secret was profoundly locked in his own bosom, and that no one living would ever take an in-

terest in it to dispute the possession, there were times when he would tremble in every muscle, and the sweat would stand in great beads on his brow. Not that remorse ever touched his flinty heart. No! it was a constant fear of detection, which rendered his life miserable, and caused sleep to be a stranger to his pillow. He became more thoughtful and moody. He was often buried in long reveries. He was very irritable; and never saw a party of gentlemen approaching the house that he did not imagine they came to tell him every thing was known, and that he was lost. While in these moods, he resorted to the wine cup for solace. But as time passed on, and he was unmolested, his terrors were partly banished, and he began to fear less. As people began to treat him more cordially, he seemed to forget the circumstance that the one man who alone could wreck him, was yet on earth.

He had for some time past intended to send to Paris for the girls; but for want of a proper person, he had delayed it. He would not send Hiver; he was afraid to trust him. Stamps was too rough and uncouth; and he doubted if he sent Stamps if he would ever find Paris; but, believing that he, of all others, was the most devoted to his interests, he thought that by sufficient drilling he might be able to make him answer for an escort. He had noticed that Stamps was much less talkative in company than formerly, and seemed to try to adapt himself to his wishes more. So Talbot concluded to send his friend. He had in his conversations with him often hinted at it, and Stamps had expressed himself ready to go. He had gradually given him all the information in regard to the estate,

and the situation of the orphans, whom he still pretended to term slaves; but he did not inform him of the discovery of the papers. No! he kept that locked in his own bosom. That would be giving Stamps too great a hold on him; and he intended to dissolve the connection between them when Stamps had returned from France.

It was one evening when Talbot was riding through the field, Stamps was coming along behind.

"Billy," he said, stopping his horse; "ride up. You know," he continued, "that when you came up here, you agreed to go by my instructions, and assist me."

"Well, I am willing to do so whenever you call on me."

"Then, Billy, you know that it is impossible for me to leave home, and it will be necessary that you go to Paris, and come home with the girls. I would give a great deal to go myself, but I am so placed that I am compelled to remain to protect my interests; for you know I have many and watchful enemies abroad."

"Just name your time, Tolly, and I will start," cried Stamps, his eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"Very good, Billy, you're a trump; we must get you ready in a few days."

At the end of the week they were sitting in the gallery waiting for a boat. He had duly lectured and warned Stamps, and repeatedly given him rules for his conduct. "Now, Billy, listen! I believe with the advice I have given you, that you can go and acquit yourself very well. You are going upon a mission of peculiar importance, and it will require all your care and prudence. Here is a letter for the Lady

Superior of the convent, notice the address; and this one is for the girls. Here is one for Hiver, who will see you off, and this you must present to my merchant who will give you money for your journey. Now in addition to what I have said, I will add: be prudent, do not talk too much, and when you *do* talk, *don't talk about yourself.*"

"Now, Tolly, you need not fear for me; I am not such a fool as I used to be."

"I believe you, and all I want you to do is to keep your senses about you; and Billy, as you value my friendship and my aid, treat the girls as a gentleman should; do not take the slightest liberty by thought or word; think of them as my relatives, and deliver them to me safe and sound, and Billy, remember your oath."

"Hold on, Tolly, enough! you have said enough; I will treat them as if they were my own sisters; I would not break that oath for all you have got."

"Well, well! now go; remember me, any how, and my friendship, and return as soon as you can. In that paper you will find some suggestions for your guidance which will be of use."

In the evening a steamer came, and Stamps was *en route* for Paris.

Talbot was now alone for the first time. When night came he was afraid to sleep alone in the chamber, and a servant was brought in. He thought perhaps, that he had been stupid in sending Stamps upon so delicate a mission; and as he lay and let his imaginations excite him, he was almost resolved to recall his ambassador; but when the morning came, he thought better of it. It was a very great sacrifice that

he made, in allowing any other than himself to go after the girls; but there was no other he would trust, and he was afraid of he hardly knew what. He was not willing to leave home for any length of time; he preferred, if there should any thing be discovered, to learn it at once, and be prepared for it by flight or otherwise, than for it to come upon him suddenly and paralyze him by its shock.

To do the fellow justice, he really, when he had started Stamps to France, had no unmanly designs against the girls; he merely wanted them out of his way, and was willing to settle on them an annuity, or alimony to be released from the fear which he ever felt. He looked upon them as an hinderance to his projects, and he determined when they came home to settle some small sum on them. He felt perfectly indifferent to their persons, but then he had not seen them for several years.

When Stamps had been gone some two weeks, Talbot received a notice from the judge, convening a family meeting, for the purpose of appointing a curator to the girls. He hesitated when he received the *procès verbal*, and almost determined to oppose it; he looked upon it as an infringement of his own rights, an interference in his affairs; but when he remembered the advice of Hiver, he then concluded to let Herndon be appointed. He therefore signed the petition, asking for the appointment of Herndon, to the latter's great surprise.

Stamps had now been gone about three weeks, and no change had occurred in the state of affairs. It was evening; Talbot had just rode in the yard from the sugar-house. Pierre had been sent to town for a bar-

rel of whisky for the negroes, and was very drunk; he had broached the barrel as he came along, and drank very freely of the liquor. He was cursing and grumbling in an outrageous manner.

Talbot was provoked, and ordered him to be silent. This incensed Pierre the more, and Talbot struck him with his riding-whip, as he again commanded him to cease.

"You ain't nothing but a upstart, no how; you ain't no gentleman any way, and dere ain't a nigger on dis plantation but tink so, and wish you was at de debil, for you ain't no right here no how."

Foaming with rage, Talbot rushed at him and struck him over the head and face with his whip again. This had no more effect than if he had beaten one of the live oak-trees in the yard, and Pierre redoubled his abuse. Talbot was frantic, and literally danced over the yard in his frenzy. The overseer was coming through the Quarter at the moment; and, while he was looking around in speechless rage, his eye fell upon the overseer.

"Here, here, come here! come over this way a moment, Mr. Grambo!" he shouted, hoarsely, "and bring your whip along."

The overseer hitched his horse to the fence and came quickly into the yard.

"What's the to-do, Mr. Talbot?" he asked.

"Take that fellow! strip him, and give him two hundred; the infernal old reprobate."

"Here, sir?" asked the overseer.

"Yes, sir, right here! put him down!" and here he seized Pierre by the collar and pulled him forcibly down, despite his struggles. He was soon stripped.

Crack! went the lash, with a shriek and a curse from Pierre; the whip swung through the air, and the blood soon begun to die the grass. Pierre was silent; the overseer tired not, and every time the whip descended, it peeled the flesh from his back.

The overseer looked at Talbot, who shook his head, "Keep on sir, till I order you to stop." Again the whip came down, and again the flesh quivered and shrunk; but the negro with fixed eye and closed teeth groaned not; he was perfectly sobered, but still he complained not. At length Talbot exclaimed,

"There, that will do, you can let him up now, sir;" he added, as the bleeding negro arose: "that will teach you a lesson, and the next time you are impertinent I will put you down and beat you with a red hot hand-saw."

"Mr. Talbot," answered Pierre, as he gathered his garments around him, "my old massa dat ain't hardly cold yet, never hit me a lick in his life, nor his father before him; I made you what you is, and now I will unmake you."

This was said gravely, and even with dignity; but there was a fiendish glare in his eyes as he spoke.

Talbot cursed him, and turning off, asked the overseer in to take a drink of brandy. He treated the threat of Pierre lightly, but had he known the malicious, treacherous, and revengeful nature of a Zambo negro, he would have trembled in his shoes.

When the next sun shone in the east, Pierre was sought for but could not be found; he had run away

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Her sorrow made her beautiful; a pity 'tis that all could not become it so."

IT was an evening of surpassing beauty. In a cell in the Convent of Mercy, at a window which overlooked the Seine, and nearer still, a parterre, which was filled with blooming exotics; sat a lovely girl of about eighteen. She was gazing intently toward the river; but her eyes were red with weeping. She heard not the noise of the million, nor saw the moving panorama of life spread out before her. No, those dark, sad eyes were filled with tears. She was a lovely being; her face was a true oval, and her features faultless. One almost believed, as he gazed into those expressive and melancholy eyes, that the Virgin lived again. Her hair was dark and glossy, and arranged in smooth and simple bands around her classic head, and suited well her complexion, which was a pure olive. She was an almost matchless being, full of grace and beauty, and one to be cherished and loved.

There was another person in the room. She was also beautiful, but her beauty was of a different style. She was fairer than the other, but the same features which marked her companion, distinguished her. Indeed, one could not but know that the ties of sisterhood existed between them. Is it necessary to call the

names of Zoe and Estelle. Does not the dark, rich tint of the skin, and the large, mild eye, the sweet, calm smile lingering around the mouth, and the happy expression of countenance, denote the parentage. Yes, they are indeed our young friends, whom we left bright and sunny little fairies, now grown up into two noble and beautiful beings.

It was Zoe who sat at the window ; it was she whose eyes were fixed upon the moving mass below ; but her soul drank in nothing present ; she was abstracted ; her thoughts were far away, in the land of her nativity, in her own dear Louisiana, where laid the bones of her parents.

Estelle was seated at a low table a few steps off with an open letter spread out before her ; the crystal drops falling thick on the page. It was the letter of Mr. Herndon announcing the death of their father.

In this position each remained some minutes, until at length she arose, and walked toward the window. She dropped down on a seat near her sister ; and throwing her arms around her, exclaimed as the tears streamed down her face. " Oh, sister, God has forsaken us. Are we not wretched. Father, mother, both. It seems but a month since the letter came with that black sorrowful news. Our mother is gone forever ; her sweet quiet smile will welcome us no more ; nor will her pure bosom pillow our brows again. Now comes this horrible news, the last and most tremendous misery. Oh, is it not terrible. I shall go mad ;" and here her emotions became so powerful that she was unable to say more.

Zoe tried to comfort her ; but her own heart was breaking.

Estelle raised her head.

"Oh, sister, I know what you would say, but comfort can not be given. We are alone, we are unprotected. Oh, who will be our friends. Oh, father, mother," she said, falling on her knees, "if your pure spirits are permitted to descend and watch over your poor orphans, oh, stoop your golden wings from heaven, come to us in spirit, and bear our prayers to our Holy Mother. Oh, parents in bliss, by the memory of those innocent and happy hours, by your love on earth, forget us not, be with us, and cheer us in this our dark hour of affliction."

"Come, dear Estelle," interrupted Zoe, who was fearful that such an excess of emotion would unsettle her reason. "Cheer up, do not give way to these terrible feelings—do for my sake, try and compose yourself."

"Ah, sister," she answered, wildly, "for your sake; and you are all that is left now to the heart-broken Estelle. But what have you or I to live for now? we are friendless orphans.

"Sister, you are wrong; we have a friend, and oh, such a friend. He is great and powerful; he can bid the angry sea be still, and its waves sink into peace. He, our great Father, the orphan's friend, He will protect us. Estelle, sister," she continued, as she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven, while a holy light seemed to irradiate her countenance, "when we were little children, and about leaving home, our mother said: Zoe, you are the elder, love and cherish your sister, she is young, teach her to love God, as I have taught you, and never close your eyes without invoking the blessing of God. Sister, I have taught—I have loved you. I love you, and our mother looks down

from Heaven, and smiles with joy. Sister let us ask *that* friend to bless, and to succor us in our sorrow."

Here she took Estelle by the hand, and they both knelt down. There, amid the din and noise of the great city, the Almighty heard the orphan's cry. Like the vibration of the wings of an angel, tremulous like the rays which fall from the sacred lights of heaven, did this pure and holy offering, ascend to God. Earnestly and with faith, did she send forth her humble supplication. *And it was heard in Heaven.*

They arose. As Zoe had supposed, her sister was calm, it was the sacred tranquillity of pure faith, the trust in a Great Watcher over all, who notes every thing; whose ears are ever open to the call of the afflicted; and without whose knowledge not even the breath which rustles the summer leaves arises. That Being who knows the fallacies of the human heart, and who is never deaf to the cry of the widow, and the orphan. The injured and the calumniated, the bruised and heart-stricken may come to Him, and find a sure friend, one who never tires, nor turns away when the soul is wrung with agony, but whose hour of retribution comes; although it may to us seem retarded. This was the Friend of Zoe and Estelle.

Just as Estelle was about to speak again, a gentle tap was heard at the door; it opened, and a sister entered. She spoke to them kindly, and brought a message from the Superior, inviting them to come down and accompany her into the convent gardens. They kindly thanked her, and replied that they would join her as soon as they had arranged their dresses.

The good Superior and ladies did every thing in their power to moderate the grief of Zoe and Estelle

The rules of the convent were broken, as the reader will perceive, even by their having a separate room. Indeed they were uneasy on account of Estelle, who was nearly frantic with grief, and any thing which could divert her own and her sister's minds from their sorrow, was eagerly tried. The girls were much beloved in the convent; both on account of their long residence, and for their inherent good qualities.

It will be perceived that the letter from Mr. Herndon had been received. This was a week previously, and still the orphans wept.

Talbot's letter had also reached them—it only added to their grief.

"Sister," said Estelle, while she was combing out Zoe's wealth of raven hair; "is this person who is named Talbot, and calls himself our relative, the same man who used to be with us when we were young, and who taught us to draw and paint?"

"Yes; he is the same, I think."

"Well, what has he to do with us? Is he our relative?"

"He was introduced as such by our father, sister; but mother used to have an aversion to him, I think. At least, from all that I can remember now, she never liked him."

They descended to the Superior.

Some days after this, the girls were sitting in their room. Several weeks had passed off since the last scene, and the first violent emotions of grief were subdued; but, in its place, a deep, pensive cast of silent sorrow remained, which dimmed the brightness of their eyes and paled their cheeks; but made them more sweet and interesting, if possible, than ever. They were

sitting together, and engaged in some light embroidery ; their thoughts and their conversations were of their dear home beyond the sea. A sister entered.—“ Young ladies,” she said, “ the Superior sends for you in the library.”

They arose, and followed her into the room where the mother was seated. She received them kindly. “ My children,” she said, when she had made them seat themselves before her ; “ the Holy Mother has heard your prayers, and sends you comfort.”

“ What mean you, mother ?” asked Zoe, anxiously.

“ My daughter, you are to leave the convent, and return to your home in America.”

“ Alas ! madam, we have no home, said Estelle, sorrowfully.

“ You are mistaken, my child,” said the lady, kindly. “ You have kind friends and true ; and they long to welcome you to their arms.”

“ We know them not,” replied she.

“ Be thankful, my children, that God has raised up friends for you ; for, when you leave the peaceful shadow of these holy walls, your path will be beset with thorns, and trials, and temptations.”

“ I would rather live in these walls than mingle in a world which can have no charms for me. The bright spots in my life would be but few. Here I could at least find peace.”

“ There are duties in life,” said the Superior, “ which we all have to perform. Go out and fill your appointed mission ; if misfortune ever shadows you with its dark wing, here you will ever find a home.”

“ Oh, mother !” exclaimed the impulsive Estelle, “ you are kind and good, and how can we leave you ?”

"The separation will cause me pain, but we must bow submissively to our duty. Come, we will go; there is a gentleman waiting your appearance in the parlor."

"Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, much surprised.

"Yes, my children, that is the cause of my sending for you. He is sent by a kinsman to protect you over the sea—to take you home."

"A kinsman, mother?"

"Yes, a relative of your father's?"

"Oh, then we will go!" exclaimed Estelle, rising; "if he is like my noble father he is good and honorable—he is pure. Come," she repeated.

"Nay, my child," exclaimed the Superior, half-smiling at her earnest manner; "there is time, methinks. You are now eager to leave our protection."

"Not so, mother," replied she, going to her side, and taking her hand, which she pressed to her lips. "Forgive my haste, but you know that your poor Estelle is almost crazy. You are a kind mother to us, and go where I will, there is a place in my poor heart devoted to respect and affection for you."

"Heartily do I forgive you, my poor child; you follow only the dictates of nature. God be with you! Come, we will go." And so saying, she extended her hand to each, and walked toward the parlor. Quickly did their bosoms heave and their pulses beat, as they stood before the door. It opened. Sitting by a table, with his eyes fixed on a painting hung in the wall, was Mr. Stamps. He was vastly improved by travel, and dressed in the latest style. A thick mustache garnished his lip—the growth of weeks, and carefully nursed by him for the present occasion. Poor Stamps,

he had been greatly annoyed. Although he had been in Paris a week, he had scarcely heard any word save the native language. It dinned in his ears, and confused his brain; and, in trying to imitate, he had almost forgotten his own tongue. He had found the convent on the second day, and had since been preparing for the visit. He said to himself, "How will I ever know how to tell them what I want, when I get there? I can't speak a word of French. Why was it that every body was not made to speak English?"

A lucky thought struck him; so, to a book-store he went, and there after an hour's pantomime in broken English, an American stepped up and relieved his embarrassment. He wanted a book of English and French conversations. This obtained, he set off to his hotel to study it. It was hard work; for Stamps had never been used to a student's life. He found a few sentences which he thought he could make use of.

The time now came for him to use them; his eyes were on them; for they were written out and pasted in his hat. The Superior entered. He looked at her. The letters had been sent to her by a sister. His eyes were bent into his hat, for his French had oozed out. Suddenly he bounced up, as if on springs.

"*Comment vous portez-vous, madame!*" he said, gaspingly.

The lady bowed, coldly, and returned his salutation. This encouraged him, and he proceeded.

"*Madame Supérieur, vous avez mon lettre?*"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"What shall I say next?" said the poor fellow, who now began to perspire.

"*Ah, madame, je ne comprend votre langage de Fran-*

çais. *M. Talbot désire Mesdemoiselles Ormond retourner à Louisiane. Il very much misère.*"

The lady smiled at the unique compound, and turning to her companion, said,

"*C'est un zéro, un vrai zéro.*"

Then to Stamps she exclaimed, "Monsieur, are you an American?"

"Yes, madam," replied he, promptly.

"You can speak English, then?"

"Like a——hem! Oh! yes, madam."

"Then you are the person who is sent to take charge of these young ladies?"

"Yes, madam. Their relative sent me; he wants to see his cousins mighty bad."

Stamps was taken aback and confused. He had expected, when he came to Paris, to see two ordinary Quadroon girls, who were to be placed far below his level, and one at least to be subject to his caprices. In their stead, he beheld before him two beings more ravishingly beautiful than he had ever dreamed, and before whom he felt humiliated. When he had in some measure recovered from his embarrassment, and the Lady Superior was conversing in a low tone with Zoe, he asked,

"Madame, I presume the letters I brought are a sufficient guaranty of my authority, and will warrant you in placing the—the young ladies under my care?"

After some thought, the lady replied, "There will be no difficulty, sir; the young ladies will accompany you."

"That's it, madam. I knew you would say it was all right."

"Will you be good enough to inform me, sir," asked she, "who is appointed guardian to the young ladies?"

"Oh, madam!" he answered, hesitating; "oh! Mr. Herndon and Mr. Talbot."

"And this Mr. Talbot is a relative?"

"Yes, madam, they know that; a cousin of their father's."

Estelle would have asked many questions, but the Superior interrupted her. "You will have time enough to ask all the questions you can think of during the voyage. We must now separate. When will you be ready to set out, sir?"

"That I leave to you, madam."

"I am not your guide, sir."

"Then, madam, in a week from to-day I will call again."

"Very good, sir."

He bowed an adieu.

It was several days before he could hear of a vessel leaving Havre for New Orleans, but at length he called at the convent, to say that on the next day he should leave. The Superior promised that the young ladies would be ready.

The morning was cool, and day had scarcely broken, as Zoe and Estelle issued from the portal in tears. They felt as if they were leaving a home. Since they entered it, they had never been from under the keeping of the good sisters. They hung in tears on the neck of the good Superior, stepped into the carriage in waiting, and were separated forever. To a diligence station they were driven, and when vehicles had been changed, were whirled away on the road to

Havre. Zoe turned her head, and looked behind. The city was fast disappearing; the steeple of Nôtre Dame and the cupola of the Pantheon were alone visible over the tops of the houses.

Havre was reached. Again they are rocked upon the billows of the Atlantic, and, dove-like, are returning to their nest. But, oh! the ruthless hand of the hunter has cut asunder the thread of life of the parent-bird. They will reach the nest, and chirp in sorrow, for it is desolate.

CHAPTER XXV.

• Man spurns the worm, but pauses ere he wake
The slumbering venom of the folded snake.
The first may turn, but not avenge the blow;
The last expires, but leaves no living foe;
Fast to the doom'd offender's form it clings,
And he may crush, not conquer—still it stings!"

THE CORSAIR.

WE have seen the inconsiderate brutality of Talbot, in punishing old Pierre so severely. He tried to banish from his breast a certain uneasy feeling. He knew that Pierre had in his keeping his honor, life, all. He had committed himself to the negro, and he well knew that there was no confidence to be placed in him; but he thought that self-interest would keep him silent. He knew moreover that the negro's statement could not convict him; but he felt that it might lead to an unpleasant investigation, which would eventually result in a discovery. He spent an uneasy night, but came to the conclusion to seek Pierre in the morning, and make it all up.

The overseer had been struck with the threat made by Pierre, and it sunk deep into his mind. He felt that there was something behind; but although he thought much, yet, as a prudent man, he kept his mouth closed.

In the morning Talbot walked into the quarter, with the intention of seeking Pierre. No one had

seen him. Inquiry was set on foot, and it was found that Pierre had not even slept in his house during the night; he had run away.

Talbot was horror-struck; he caused the overseer to take a party of negroes, to hunt the swamp thoroughly; he himself also went a different route; he was now really alarmed, and rode hither and thither in a state of the greatest agitation. Dinner-time came, he rode up; the overseer was standing in the yard, tired and covered with mud.

"Have you found the old scoundrel?" he asked, in a tone of anxiety, which he tried to hide.

"No, sir," replied Grambo; "I've been all over the swamp, and I can't see hide or hair of him! Maybe he's gone and drowned himself."

"A very good resolution, if he has."

When Pierre had made the threat to Talbot, he walked off slowly and painfully. His soul was filled with a deadly rage: he had been beaten cruelly and inhumanly by a man for whom he felt a deep contempt—by a man whom he had the sagacity to know he had elevated to his present position by concealing papers of value. He had hoped to have been benefited by the change of owners; but he found harder labor, worse fare, and worse treatment. He had often regretted that the part he had taken in it had raised Talbot to the situation he occupied; and the present occasion was the mere igniting of the fuse to a mine, the explosive materials of which were already prepared. A long series of injuries and impositions had to be avenged. Some negroes would have sought a personal injury, for all are capable of it. Some would have fired the sugar-house; and others concocted

other injury. But Pierre, as we have seen, was no common negro : he was possessed of deep and subtle cunning.

The reader is aware that he was what is termed a "Zambo." The Zambos are noted for a deep and ferocious subtilty ; very deceitful ; inflicting injuries long after the cause has been forgotten, and when least expected. They are the descendants of the *Mulatto* and *Zambo* negro, and are known by their peculiarly black skins. Pierre was a real Zambo. He sought his cabin, lay down, and remained until late in the evening. He lay plotting his revenge.

It was long since dark. Suddenly he started up, and limped sorely out. All was still. Sleep reigned over all. He stood before his door, and looked with a gloomy and scowling brow toward the dwelling. A solitary light shone from a window. It was Talbot's room. Deep and devilish thoughts were in the Zambo's bosom. As he turned to go, a small dog, which generally followed, attempted to accompany him now. He tried to force it back, and still it persisted. Without hesitating a moment, he reached his hand inside the door, near which stood his ax. He raised it, and inflicted a terrible wound on the poor animal, which crawled under the house, and died.

Without a moment's regret at the cruel deed, he strode forward as fast as the state of his lacerated body would allow. He jumped the fence, so as to hide his footsteps, and took his way through the cane. He went straight to Mr. Herndon's plantation.

Mr. Herndon had retired to bed, and was awakened by a tapping at his window. He arose hastily and went to the casement.

"Who is that?" he asked, looking down.

"Me, sir—Pierre."

"Pierre! what are you doing here, sir? Is any thing wrong?"

"It's all wrong, Mr. Herndon. Let me come in, sir, and I'll tell you something you would like to know."

Herndon thought a moment, for he knew how treacherous the negro was; but at last said, "Go to the side-door, sir."

Pierre disappeared, and Herndon took up his walking-cane as he went to the door.

"Now, Mr. Herndon," Pierre said, "put me whar the other niggers won't hear me, and I will talk."

"Come in here, then," said Herndon, struck by the negro's grave manner, as he led the way to his chamber, and shut the door.

"Now, what is it, sir?"

"Well, Mr. Herndon, sir, ever since my master died, I have tried to please that man; but now, sir, I won't stand it no longer."

"What do you mean, sir? Do you come here with your complaints at this time of night, and expect me to interfere between your new master and you?"

"He ain't none of my master. Mr. Herndon, my back is cut deep, and the flesh is a-hangin' in rags from it. That man, that calls me his nigger, had it done. Now, sir, I was a black rascal to do what I has done, and maybe, if I hadent a done it, he would n't a bin thar."

"Will you tell me what you want, you black old rascal? You are drunk, and have been whipped for some villainy, I suppose."

"No, sir; I was put down this evening, and give three hundred licks because I got drunk."

"Just as I supposed."

"No, sir; that ain't all. I was drunk, and I was beat worse than a dog; and now I come to tell you that I stole the paper."

"What paper?" interrupted Herndon, the truth now suddenly bursting on him; and he turned pale with emotion.

"My master give me a paper when he was so sick, and says he, 'Pierre, when I am gone, take this paper from the cabinet, an' give it to Mr. Herndon.' Well, sir, Talbot had give me money often, and I spent it in whisky; and he promised me more, and he made me steal all the papers I could find, and keep them for him. I gin him this ar one, and he is bin a lordin' it over me ever sence."

"Why did you not tell me this before, sir?"

"'Case I was afeard, and I thought I would n't have no more work to do when he come thar; but I has had harder work, and more starvin' than I ever got in my life; an' I only wish I had my old master back agin."

For several minutes Herndon sat without speaking. A thousand conflicting thoughts passed through his mind. "Have I got the clew to this mystery," he thought, "or is Pierre deceiving me?" He looked the black long and steadily in the face without speaking, and then cross-examined him again and again. At last he spoke.

"You have run away, Pierre?"

"Yes, sir; and I ain't a gwine back no more there."

"Yes, but you must return."

"That man will kill me, sir."

"He will not, Pierre," he said, looking at him fixedly. "If you are deceiving me, I will have you whipped; but if it is true, and I can succeed in proving it, I will give you your freedom! Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," he answered. "I tell you, sir, 'cause I hates the upstart, as all the rest of 'em does; and you can jest kill me if I lies."

"Well, Pierre, you must go back, and act as if you had just been out in the cane. Go to Talbot, beg off, and promise not to do so again. Lay the fault on the liquor—you understand me?—and leave the rest to me. Will you do it?"

"Yes, sir. I can go back, and just do that way."

"Pierre, keep your mouth shut. Do you hear? Act as if you had forgotten it all."

"Mr. Herndon, I knows what you mean well, and you need n't be 'feard of me. You must let me stay 'bout here; I'll go up in the stable loft, and lay there tell I git easy. I got some vittils here in my bundle. I'll go back, sir."

"That 's it, Pierre; but don't let any of the negroes see you here."

"No, sir; I won't."

The reflections to which this conversation gave rise in the breast of Herndon were various; but he was convinced of Pierre's sincerity, for he had narrowly watched him while speaking, and saw a dogged resolution of revenge alone predominant. He felt that he had a clew, slight as it was, to the supposed neglect of Ormond. He imagined that he had taken a thread which would lead to the ejection of Talbot. The course to be pursued he left to fate; but he determined

to go to Martinique, to learn, if possible, if Ormond had married Marie, and if the children were legitimated. He scarcely had a hope of this; but the idea was vivid and sudden, and he formed a resolution to penetrate to the bottom.

Pierre remained in the straw in Mr. Herndon's stable, to "make de search arter him more interestin," as he said, and on the evening of the second day, about sundown, descended from his roost. The news quickly spread at Talbot's, the next morning, that "Pierre done come in." Great was the delight of Talbot; for he was much alarmed, and his constant anxiety of mind had thrown him into a fever. He felt that all the beautiful schemes he had built up were being undermined, and that all was a ruin; all was lost. He felt like flying, and leaving the country, after securing a portion of the property. He even armed himself, to be prepared in case of emergency.

He was completely deceived by Pierre, who expressed great sorrow for his late conduct, and promised to get drunk no more. This at once satisfied Talbot, and he began to get easier and more content; but he formed a resolution to put it out of the Zambo's power ever to injure him.

He now began daily to look for the return of Stamps with his charge. His face would flush, and a tremor, a strange feeling of excitement, would run through his frame, as he thought of having the girls in his power. He arranged a chamber for their accommodation, and had concealed springs placed in the sashes to prevent their being raised. He, indeed, entered into the minutiae of arrangements with a feverish interest.

Mr. Herndon left for the city in pursuance of his

purpose, and a few days after his arrival there he was seeking a vessel bound for Cuba. The reader will remember that when Ormond determined to go to the West Indies, and Martinique was selected, Mr. Hern-
don was present, and aware of the place of their destination. He now took passage on a vessel for Cuba, in the expectation of getting one thence for Marti-
nique.

CHAPTER XXVI

"And the cypress lifted a blazing spire,
And the stems of the cocoas were shafts of fire;
Many a white pagoda's gleam
Slept lovely round on lake and stream."

HEMANS.

THE water in the Bay of Naples was still and mirror-like. A blue haze filled the atmosphere, and objects seen through it were mellowed and softened into a dreamy picture. The sky had no cloud, but was of that deep blue tint so peculiar to Italy. You could see through it further up into heaven than in our harsher clime. The lofty island of Capri, seen in the distance, appeared a fairy isle, floating in a liquid rarer than air. The city rose gradually, crowned by the hoary castle of St. Elmo. The hills in the rear of the city are covered with vineyards, villas and monasteries. There is the Capo di Monti, and the monastery of San Martina, which crowns the hills, while behind is a range of wooded mountains.

To the right may be seen Vesuvius, sending up a thin spiral wreath of smoke to heaven, while beyond all are dimly observed the summits of the Apennines.

It was indeed a calm and bright day, such as this favored clime alone can boast. On the mole, leaning over and resting on an old gun, which was sunk into the quay for a post, was a handsome man, of appa-

rently some forty years. He was gazing pensively over the bay, but whether his eyes were bent on the heights of Vesuvius, or on the white walls of Castellmare, the old town of Sorrento, Tasso's birthplace, or taking in the beautiful villas on the western shore, you could not tell. By and by he awoke as if from a dream, and his glance fell on the vessels in the harbor.

"At last," he murmured. "At last, I must return home—to my dear home. I must mingle there with the world, as of yore. I must renew old associations, and make new friends. I must laugh and be gay, while my heart is buried with Caroline, under these summer skies. There are some few noble hearts left yet on earth; there still is Ormond, generous and high-toned, self-sacrificing and pure. His heart will beat a throb faster when he sees his soul-weary friend. And you too, gentle Maria—well-named—pure and spotless, simple and true—you will welcome the wanderer home; and, for the sake of the lost Caroline, give to him some portion of the esteem you felt for her."

The speaker, as the reader has discerned, was our friend, Dr. Grant. He had wandered hither and thither since the death of his wife; from Greece to Turkey; from the sands of Palestine to the icy shores of the White Sea; from the wilds of Caucasus to the capitals of Continental Europe; and now, exhausted and worn-out by excitement, which he had sought for, in the first instance, to dull the pangs of grief, now he had settled down into a calmer, a sadder, and a wiser man. He had come to Naples, and intended to embark for America, to spend the remainder of his life among his friends.

"Yes," he continued, "I will return at once to the land of my birth. All I love now are there, and they will sympathize with me, and cheer a broken heart."

Poor fellow, he little knew the tremendous change which death had made during his absence, in that dearly-loved circle, to which he was hastening. He little dreamed that death had come and made desolate that happy family home; that he himself was their destined avenger—an avenger in whom there was no pity, no relenting; and that he was hastening on, as remorseless as fate—to prevent a wrong—to rescue the orphan's heritage.

Dr. Grant remained in the posture we described, his thoughts wandering far over the sea, and his eyes fixed upon the waters of the bay, just now slightly sparkling in the morning breeze. His attention was attracted by the appearance of a young man, who was on the point of leaping from a boat which had just run her bow up on the sandy beach. There was something in the figure, and in the attitude of the person, which struck him as familiar; yet he in vain conjectured whether they had before met. He was on the point of turning off toward the city, when the stranger's voice reached his ears. He was giving the boatman some orders respecting a bundle which contained his portfolio. The doctor paused, and kept his eye fixed on him as he advanced. His hair and eyes were piercingly dark; and his mouth and chin, even as he came, displayed energy in repose. He was an eminently handsome man; and, as he walked, the symmetry of his form could be observed. He spoke to his attendant; his voice was rich, deep, and flexible; it sounded like an old familiar tone; like the house-

hold-music which passes through the seaman's brain when, rocked by the billows, he fondly dreams of home. That tone he had heard in happier days; it was then not so rich—so mellow—and so manly; yet it was the same. Grant shut his eyes; he was, in imagination, again by the side of Caroline, away by the cane-fields of Louisiana, listening to the song of the bird—the hum of the bee—the harping of heaven's wind through the branches of the trees. The stranger passed him; his gaze, for the first time, fell on the doctor; he stopped and hesitated; then, as if reassured, he bowed slightly, and was about to pass on. He knew him not; years had passed; the head of the doctor bore white blossoms of the grave, and his dress was foreign; but that slight look of interest and inquiry told him all.

“Hold!” exclaimed he.

The stranger obeyed, and turned. Grant was at his side in a moment. The two stood mutely gazing into each other's hearts, as it were; then, as if by a simultaneous impulse of recognition, they were clasped in each other's arms.

“Dr. Grant!”

“Louis Lamotte!” were the exclamations which passed; and for a minute the only ones.

We will not linger on the meeting; the thousand questions of interest asked and replied to by each in a short time. Any one who has been for years away from his home and fireside, a wanderer among strangers, with the burden of a broken-heart, will appreciate such feelings, at such a time; especially if suddenly meeting a dear and valued friend. But oh! how keen was the anguish of Grant, when Louis informed him

of the death of Marie! How his heart swelled with grief, and how scalding was the tears which dropped on his young friend's hand!

"Lamotte!" he exclaimed, brushing them away; "I thought I had done with this. Tears! Why, I am as dry as a mummy. Well, God pity me! Poor, poor, Ormond! Your heart has bled like your friend's. Now will I hasten to you the sooner for your grief. But Louis, my boy, what are you doing here?" he added, banishing with an effort those feelings.

"Why, doctor, the truth is, that a year ago I left the Polytechnique School, determining to see a little of the world. I always longed to visit this portion of it; so, I left books and philosophy, and set off on foot with my knapsack and portfolio; and, after being every where, I am here."

"I suppose you saw Zoe and Estelle before you left Paris?"

Louis blushed deeply at this question, and laughed in a confused manner.

"I see how it is," exclaimed the doctor, "and I am glad of it; and I know that nothing would please Ormond more. Do you remember how I used to tease you about Zoe?"

"I remember all," answered Louis, sighing.

"Oh, well, Louis, if the woman fulfills the promise of the girl, either of the sisters are worthy of the most devoted love, even of so gallant a fellow as yourself."

"I thank you, doctor; but maybe Ormond may not think as well of it as you."

"Never fear, Louis; you are a favorite. But a truce to this. Let us go to yonder open inn, and, I'll be sworn a glass of good Cypress will set us to rights

I am quite choice in my drink now; but I do not know how it will be when I return to the whisky of the Ohio. Come, that bunch of grapes over the door is inviting—I feel a great change already in me at the sight of your face, albeit it is more manly than it was."

"I am with you," said Louis.

As soon as they were seated, the doctor drew his chair to the open window, and, putting his feet out of the latter, *à l'Américaine*, resumed the conversation.

"Well, Louis, my heart yearns to revisit our Fatherland, to look upon her tranquil shores, and see the broad bosom of the dear old muddy Mississippi once more. My future life can never be an unmixed stream of happiness; yet I submit to the decrees of a fate I can not avoid. I have at last concluded to return. The poet's idea is one that finds an echo in my heart:

"My dearest home! my childhood's home!
Beyond far fairer lands
Thou art, despite thine aspect wild,
The *all* my soul demands.
The visions of the loved and lost
Are blended with each scene,
And memory lives to linger o'er
Each spot where bliss has been."

The doctor struggled hard with his feelings; but, in spite of his exertions, the "memory of other days" caused the tear to glisten in his eye. "Louis," he said, as he poured out the sparkling wine, "drink! I'll try and bear it, and leave such thoughts for my solitary moments. What do you think of going to America?"

"Doctor," he answered, after a moment's reflection, "I would like very much to accompany you, but the term of my probation has hardly expired."

"That is nonsense. You have arrived at an age to judge for yourself. Will you go?"

"Doctor, you have touched a chord in my heart. I was intending to visit the north of Europe, but I will go with you."

"Well said, my brave fellow!" answered Grant, exultingly; "we will go."

"Agreed," said Louis.

"Right, my boy! right! Your company will be a solace to me. Instead of taking ship at Genoa, we will at once to Paris; and there, Louis, we will see the girls, whom I love as much as if they were my own. A day or two there, and then to Havre."

"I will go, doctor, although I have not the advice of my guardian; still, he will not blame me."

"I will set you easy on that score. I thank you for your acquiescence," said Grant, taking him by the hand, and shaking it heartily. "Here is to your health, and may your future life never be clouded by a single storm."

Louis, thanking him, reciprocated his good wishes, and they departed.

The day was spent in rambling about Naples and its environs. Over the entombed cities at the base of Vesuvius they roamed, and speculated over their remains. Upon the island of Capri, which Tiberias chose as an abode, and to the Cape of Minerva, where the Parthenopian syren dwelt; amid the ruins of former grandeur, and rich associations of classic lore, the two reunited friends spent many hours; and it was

only when the sun was declining that they wended their way homeward.

At length night came. Ah! who can conceive, but those who have experienced it, the delicious and voluptuous languor which steals over one here, in this heavenly climate; the balmy breeze from over the bay, freighted with perfumes; the laughter of the boatmen; the merry voices of passengers, or, maybe, of a gay party of the Neapolitans, as they are slowly rowed over the glassy bosom of the water? There was the sound of music from each balcony; the palaces of the nobles were illuminated with splendor; and, ever and anon, the far-off song of the fisherman over the water, was heard piously ascending to the Virgin.

Then, the mole which projected far out into the bay, was covered with idlers of all nations. There was the big-speaking Englishman, the querulous Frenchman, the silver-tongued Italian, and the melodious Spaniard.

Around a kind of troubadour were gathered a knot of sailors, mostly natives, who were listening with silent interest to the songs of the musician—an interest broken only by some expression of pleasure from the attentive group.

Our friends sat at the edge of the water, which, reflecting the blue sky and bright stars, made them seem swimming in a bath of liquid light. It appeared as if one could see far down into another world, so pure, so bright and transparent was the crystal sheet before them. Louis listened to the doleful strain of the musician, telling the story of some lovely maid carried off by corsairs. The doctor's thoughts were far away, wandering back to a little mound of earth,

clothed with flowers. Sad memories were busy at his heart. It was on such a night as this that he bade adieu to that angel, who, from among the pure and beautiful lights of Paradise, was now looking down on the beloved partner of her brief earthly happiness.

The following morning a golden mist was in the atmosphere, as our travelers embarked in a small felucca for Genoa.

A week elapsed, and it was mid-day, as the two passengers, from Lyons, covered with dust, alighted from a diligence at one of the principal hotels in Paris.

"This begins to seem like civilization," said the doctor, as they looked from their window upon the populous street, and as he arranged his toilet.

Louis, who was lounging on a bed, added, "We want only a New Orleans mint-julep to render the deception perfect."

In the evening they left the hotel to seek the convent. Dr. Grant, with the feeling of a fond father, longed to press to his bosom the children of his dearest friend; and Louis, who loved, and had always loved, felt a strange emotion in his breast, at the thought of again seeing the object of his pure affection. He had sometimes gone too see the girls during the first year of their sojourn in Paris; but of late he had not gone so frequently. He did pay them a visit before he left Paris on his rambles, and so from them first learned the death of their mother.

The heavy Gothic architecture of the convent soon came in view, and they proceeded to the principal entrance. The portress appeared; the doctor asked for the Superior, and was ushered into the parlor. Scarce three minutes elapsed before she entered the room.

After introducing themselves, the object of their visit was stated.

"Ah, gentlemen," she replied; "you can not be aware of the melancholy occurrence which—."

"Good Heavens! madam!" vehemently cried Dr. Grant, wholly forgetting the presence in which he stood, and the sanctity of the place. "Your looks tell of something dreadful, speak out! has any thing happened?" Then recovering himself and actually blushing, he continued. "Forgive me, madam! but I am a dear friend of their father's, and your hesitation caused me to feel uneasy."

"Dear sir," she replied, "my forgiveness you have. I have heard the dear children, in speaking of their home, mention your name with kindness. But the young ladies have gone to America, in charge of a gentleman sent for them by a relative, a Mr. Talbot."

"Ha! treason!" exclaimed the doctor; "the infernal villain. And does Colonel Ormond, their father, sanction this, madam?"

"Alas! sir, he lives no longer."

"Dead, dead!" shouted he, leaping from his seat. "It is impossible! When! where! did this occur? This is a most fearful blow! Is this true, madam? or have they imposed on your credulity? Ormond dead! no, it can not be."

"I know not, sir," replied the Superior, who appeared to be slightly offended, "if I have been imposed upon, but I have the letters written to me by their kinsman, and that was, I suppose, a sufficient authority for me."

"Then pray, madam, let me see them; this blow is so sudden, so unlooked for."

She rang a small bell; a domestic stood before her; she gave her an order, and the woman disappeared, but returned directly, bearing a package of papers, which she proceeded to examine. The doctor all this while was walking hastily back and forth the room, his mind a tumult, and his brain confused. When the sister entered with the papers he walked to the Superior and hastily seized the proffered letter of Talbot. He hurriedly read it, then crushing it in his hand, exclaimed—

“By the powers of a higher world! Ormond, my friend! but I will avenge you, if you have been injured—I will save your children from the monster. If I fail in this, I will shave my head and become a monk the remainder of my life.

“Madam, I offer you my excuses for my discourteous manner; but when the heart is stirred with agony there is no time for conventionalities. I had a friend who has been cut off in the prime of life, and I very much suspect that this person, Talbot, is trying to play a foul game, which, for want of proof, may be successful.”

“He is the near relative of Colonel Ormond, and I presume has a right to a portion of the property, and the guardianship of the children.”

“No more than you have, madam; but how long have they been gone?”

“About three weeks, sir.”

“Then there is yet time. He has the game to himself. Madam, farewell! Come Louis, now for vengeance! Oh, Ormond, my friend, and *you* too gone!”

Louis was much shocked, and he remained as if stunned while this scene was being enacted. But he

at once went to the hotel with Dr. Grant, and took the Diligence for Havre.

We next find our excellent friends leaning over the bulwarks of a vessel bound for Charleston, in America, and watching the receding shores of France

CHAPTER XXVII.

"He looked on her with dangerous eye-glance,
Showing his nature in his countenance."

SPENSER'S *Fairy Queen*.

WE again call upon the scene-shifter and turn to others of our characters. Zoe and Estelle sailed from Havre under the protection of Stamps. He scarcely knew how to conduct himself toward them. He was fearful if he treated them with too much respect, knowing the licentious character of Talbot, that he would be laughed at. He had been candidly told the condition of the girls before he left, and he knew that Talbot could and would claim them as slaves. Yet still when he looked on them in all their youth and grace, and beauty, his rising feelings would be checked by their dignified modesty. At the same time he had determined the fate of *one* of them at least, upon their arrival in New Orleans. He, however, concluded to act toward them under present circumstances with respect; but he could not avoid letting them observe his ardent gaze fixed on them as they came on deck. They were disgusted and alarmed, and longed for the termination of the voyage, well believing that in Mr. Herndon they would find a protector. To heighten this feeling on their part, he one day informed them that he was aware of the relation in which Colonel Ormond stood to their mother.

What agony these two poor unprotected orphans experienced, can only be imagined by the virtuous and good; and they felt an unaccountable relief when the line of coast which debouches out from the main land into the Gulf of Mexico, came in sight; but they sighed when they remembered that here they parted years before with those who were now no more; whose glad smile and endearing embrace would have atoned for the absence of so many long years. No! those dear parents were now no more, and they felt in approaching their native shores as strangers and exiles. They had noticed the singular attentions which Stamps showed them, and which gradually increased in boldness, until they almost arose to violence. Shudderingly they received them, but feared to offend the only one whom they could call protector. Many were the tears the unhappy girls shed as they sought their state-rooms to lament over the sad fate which placed them in his power; for they felt that they were in his power, and began to dread the moment of their separation from the rest of the passengers.

It was not that Stamps had said any thing very pointed, or spoken plainly of his feelings; but he had intimated to them that they were wholly dependent upon the bounty of Talbot; and observed that a strict compliance with his wishes would be beneficial to them.

We say that Stamps had never spoken out plainly; but it was with horror that they were forced to certain conclusions. Ah, although reared within the sacred walls of a convent, they had tact enough to appreciate it all. Like the shrinking mimosa, whose delicate organization heralds the approach of danger, their souls recoiled and contracted at his approach.

Females have an instinctive feeling, which prompts them to beware when an enemy draws near; and words, looks, actions, are all rapidly understood, and virtue easily takes the alarm before the attack is made.

So it was with the orphans; they knew that a secret meaning lurked in Stamp's breast, although perhaps they were not such graduates in the knowledge of good and evil as those who are raised in the school of city dissipation. Still they comprehended most of the enormous villainy before the voyage was completed. But the wicked plotting against their peace of mind was not understood or appreciated by them. Oh! no; had the full truth burst upon their affrighted souls, they would have shrunk back aghast with horror, and the blue waves of the gulf would have closed over them before they would have left the ship's side with their enemy.

As for Stamps, he had at first been deterred from acting in a disrespectful manner, but as they advanced, and familiarity wore off some of the diffidence he naturally possessed, his feelings began to be wildly excited. He determined to restrain those emotions, until a proper moment, and to fulfill his promise to Talbot; but he had been rocked upon the billows of passion from a child, and never knew the salutary influence of self-control.

He sat down and played chess with them or watched their sylph-like figures as they promenaded the deck; or sat entranced and gazed at them, as they reclined at mid-day on the cabin sofas.

Then with set teeth, and quickened pulse, he would swear that Zoe should be his. In fact he was madly,

deeply enamored with her beauty, and felt that he would dare the wrath of Heaven, to possess her.

He was, as we have shown, a depraved man, and scarcely knew reason, law, or honor. In other respects he was not so lost to all the ennobling qualities which ornament mankind. He was a bold man, and would scruple at no means to accomplish his object. At the same time he was generous, and would even put himself out of the way to do a favor to a friend. He had sworn to keep within the bounds of propriety with the girls, and, therefore exercised a partial control over his emotions. He promised Talbot not to communicate the secret regarding the property, and their actual situation, until their arrival in New Orleans.

Thus were the parties, when the ship was taken in tow at the Balize. Then in the hurry and confusion of packing up cases, and getting in and out their luggage, those feelings were diverted from their tempestuous course for a brief period. The vessel reached the wharf, and the voyage was over. They stood on the soil of their nativity, without a friend or a guide.

It was at a splendid hotel, crowded with guests, and filled with all the appurtenances of comfort and luxury that the coach stopped, and the victims were soon ushered into a handsome private parlor adjoining their chamber.

Stamps had performed his part of the contract and he looked for his reward.

After supper he appeared in their chamber from his own, which was immediately adjoining. They were standing at a window looking out upon the lighted streets, and hurriedly consulting with each other as to

what Talbot would do in regard to their father's property, which they believed belonged to them.

"Was it not our father's?" said Estelle, "and is it not in justice ours now? what right has this man to deprive us of it? He surely will not do it."

"Oh, sister," replied Zoe, "we have been away a long time, and maybe, we have lost all claim to it; Mr. Stamps says we are dependent on Mr. Talbot even for our very bread."

"Then I had rather work for it," was the reply. "I can sew, and you, sister, can teach drawing and music."

"Yes, yes, we can; or I might obtain a place as a governess, and—

"Not so fast, not so fast, ladies," exclaimed a voice quite close to them. They both started, and drew closer to each other. It was Stamps, who had stolen in unperceived.

"Now, young ladies," he said, as he negligently threw himself upon a sofa, and flung his legs over the back of a chair; "it is better—to—to take things moderately at first; and if you will promise me not to interrupt but to listen to me, I will say something to you, which may put you on better terms with me."

They silently looked at one another, and made no reply, but seated themselves.

"Now," continued he, "first, you know who your mother was?"

"We do, sir," replied Estelle; "and if it be of that dear parent you are to speak, we desire to hear no more. You have already spoken once before of her in a manner that no child would bear."

"Hoity toity!" laughed he; "that is so far so good. Now, hear me; for you must hear me, whether you

will or no. I have to say that to you which you had better listen to. Well, your mother was a Quadroon woman, unmarried—mark that, *unmarried*—but living with Colonel Ormond. By him she had children. *She was a slave.*”

“That is false, sir!” exclaimed both the girls at once, rising, while a tempest of rage flashed in their eyes. “That is a base falsehood, sir!”

“Well, all this is mighty fine; but the fact was proved in court long ago, and not only that she died a slave, but that *you two educated ladies are slaves*. Talbot is the heir, and you will be disposed of as he wishes.”

He paused for a reply; but astonishment, anger and grief had stricken them dumb; they sat as if stupified. He was encouraged, and proceeded.

“Now, I will form a plan against Talbot, and assist you. I have long loved you, Zoe—yield to me. Be mine without the forms of the Church, and he never shall have power to injure you.”

“Accursed fiend!” exclaimed Zoe, rising suddenly, in unutterable indignation. “Begone! and believe me, I would sooner die than be your lawful wife, much less the thing you would make me. Leave us, sir!” And here she became overpowered by contending emotions, and sunk again into the chair in an agony of tears.

“Is there no law in this land to protect the orphan?” exclaimed Estelle. “If there is, I will appeal to it.”

“You had better not, miss. In this case there is no help. Your best mode is to rely on my protection, to make a friend of me.”

"A *friend*! yes, a *fiend*!" said Zoe, raising her head. "You are a *friend*! The tiger would defend the unprotected lamb; the hawk will guard the dove."

"You may think you are right," he said; "but it is not my wish to injure you, and to prove it, I now, Zoe, offer you my hand in honorable marriage."

He had taken this step to gain his purpose, because he saw it would not answer to bring the matter to a *dénouement* too soon, and by force. He thought to lull their suspicion, and then make an easy prey.

Zoe replied—"Mr. Stamps, your insulting proposal is too fresh in my mind for me to listen to you on any subject. We never could be any nearer, and I would never marry you. If you have the soul of a man, or the slightest spark of generosity, leave us, and hasten to Mr. Talbot, and say we await his arrival, and we will try to believe this a horrible dream."

"Nay, nay; I do not leave here until you have given me some encouragement—some hope for me to work upon."

"I can not bid you hope," said Zoe, who thought it best to delay giving him a decided and indignant refusal, well knowing that she was in his power, and that he might be induced to use coercion. "Go and leave us; and oh! take pity on us. We are unprotected."

Stamps arose. "I will go," he said, "and at once write to Talbot, who will be down on the first boat; but remember, you will find no sympathy in his bosom. Decide on my protection."

"We confide in the protection of one greater than you," said Zoe.

"Who is he?"

"God!"

"I don't know him," was the answer of Stamps, as he left the room.

Stamps retired to his room, and there sat down. The following note was dispatched that night by mail to Talbot.

"——— Hotel, NEW ORLEANS,

"May 15, 18—.

"DEAR TOLLY:—

"I have arrived, and the two birds are safely caged. Hasten to me, and say that I have succeeded well. I await my reward, as your promise is recorded, and I have set my heart on its fulfillment. Hasten! I expect you. I have taken rooms here. Inquire for '*Mr. Brown and the two Misses Brown,*' as these are the names I have assumed. I was not green enough to give our real names. Come on! We will have fun, for we are as retired here, in this populous hotel, as we would be in a desert. Yours ever,

"STAMPS.

"P. S. *Zoe is mine.*"

When this letter was sent off, he returned to his room, and there remained, guarding the treasures which the next chamber contained.

In the solitude of his chamber, he gave the rein to his imagination. He listened attentively to every sound from his neighbors, and played the jealous sentinel to perfection.

During the long, long night, he lay, and while the innocent children were offering up their pure petitions to their Heavenly Guardian, he was wrapped in sinful dreams.

The next day he dined with many of the passengers of the ship, and wine flowed freely.

It was evening again. The girls sat in their chamber, clothed in mourning; their faces were pale, and grief had left its impress; for their brows were troubled, and their eyes were red with weeping.

Stamps had been drinking freely, for his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes sparkled with the excitement of wine. Unbidden, he entered their apartment.

"Zoe," he said, while his eyes glowed with a demoniacal light as he surveyed her beauteous form, "I cannot endure this suspense. You must be mine. I adore you. Will you be mine?" He here approached her, and his breath burned her cheek. She drew back in affright, and exclaimed,

"Mr. Stamps, sir, for heaven's sake do not impose on our unprotected state; be a man."

"Zoe, listen," he said; "be mine, I will protect you against the world. Talbot will sell you as a slave; and he will force you—compel you to submit."

"He never, never will—he shall not—I will die first."

"Then you will die; for you are in his power—a slave—and he has the power. Come, consent to be mine." Here he caught her by the arm forcibly, and essayed to draw her near.

"Spare me, spare me!" she cried, falling on her knees, and imploring him with piteous accents.

This seemed to inflame the fiend still more; his eyes sparkled with agitation. He approached nearer; but she glided from him, and ran to the other side of the room. Her hair had become disheveled in the struggle, and she trembled violently with terror. He

pursued, and again caught her in his arms. Zoe was nearly senseless from alarm, could only utter a feeble cry, and then sank on the floor. He seized her in his arms, and lifting her up, bore her swiftly to her chamber. She was aroused, and again pleaded as if for her life.

"Oh, sir pray! Oh! do not, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, do me this grievous wrong. Oh! have pity on an orphan child! Oh! my father, my mother! Look down and protect your child. God hear me!" Stamps bore her to the couch, and stood by her side in his unholy frenzy.

During all this time, Estelle was crouching in a corner, with her fingers in her ears, more dead than alive. She knew that assistance was not at hand. She knew that the door was locked; and that her feeble cry for aid would only irritate the wretch, and avail her nothing.

Zoe lay with her heart fluttering like a wounded dove—her eyes starting with horror. Stamps placed himself by her side.

She started up—"Oh, sir! I am under your protection; do not dishonor yourself. You are welcome to all our fortune."

"That is already gone," he said.

"Then spare me—I will be your slave—even bear with me for a time; I will try and conquer my feelings; but oh, spare me now!"

"Never, never!" he exclaimed.

"Spare me, for the sake of my friends! Oh, for the sake of all you hold dear! Have you a sister? By her honor! By your MOTHER! She may be in her grave—I charge you by her memory—by the days

of your youth and innocence, and by her gray hairs! Oh, spare me, spare me!"

Never did a more decided effect follow an invocation. The appeal to him, "by the memory of his mother," was like oil poured upon angry billows. It said, "Peace, be still!" Stamps descended from a state of excitement into a calm. He drew back, and sank down, with his hands over his eyes.

"Zoe," he said, "you have conquered. You have appealed to me in the name of my mother. That name with me is sacred. Her gray hairs are your protection. No! I will not harm you. Be at peace. Here is the key of your apartment—I leave you." He turned away. Zoe sprang forward and caught him by the hand. She pressed it to her lips, passionately, and exclaimed; "Bless you! bless you!" Then, sinking on the floor, she burst into a torrent of tears. He stood still a moment—a tear dimmed his eye—he sighed heavily, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE now return to Talbot. He had gradually accustomed himself to the great change in his fortunes, and bore it philosophically. He superintended the economy of the plantation with as natural an air as if he had been raised in the South, and felt his own importance in no slight degree. The fright which Pierre had given him was over, and Pierre was more humble and more obedient than ever. Time passed on, and the feeling of uneasiness which would often creep over him had almost entirely vanished. He felt secure in his seat. He had long since dispensed with the services of Hiver, who, mistaken in his calculations regarding the plucking he intended to have off the young goose, retired in disgust and mortification to his dingy law books. But they sometimes met; and Hiver managed, by a show of knowledge of his affairs, to keep a slight hold on him.

He knew that Mr. Herndon was absent from home; but, of course, imagined he was in the city. He knew not the dreadful storm that was gathering over him; that the clouds were accumulating, and the lightning of vengeance gathering. He heard not the distant muttering of the thunder, nor the rising wind. No! secure and tranquil, he dreamed of naught but bright skies and calm seas.

He was dreaming of the arrival of the orphan children of Colonel Ormond, and his prurient imagination was excited by the pictures which were constantly painted on his mind.

The reader well knows the wicked ideas which had been generated and fostered in his brain, and with what pertinacity he clung to the frightful images. He now only waited the arrival of Stamps to secure in his power the innocent girls.

A few weeks rolled by. He had decided in his own mind the course to pursue; for he had lost, if he ever had possessed, all compunction of feeling for the sad fate of those he should have loved and guarded, if not for their own sake, at least from gratitude for the kindness shown to him by their father, when he came to the country a penniless adventurer. But such feelings were to him unknown, for his whole soul was enveloped in self.

At first he had rather hesitated in what manner to receive the girls. He had thought that, to keep up appearances, and save himself, it were best to put them in obscurity, and on a small pension; but when the words of Hiver rang in his ears, "*The children shall follow the condition of the mother,*" and he felt that he was unmolested, and had the legal right on his side to act, he determined, if they pleased him, to compel them to his wishes; and when the determination was fixed, the thing appeared less monstrous than at first. Thus it is: when the first thought of crime comes into the mind, it is struck with horror, and shrinks, appalled, from the contact; but as we accustom ourselves to think on it, the blackness assumes a lighter tint, and we can revolve it in our minds with-

out fear. At length it ceases to revolt us at all. What lessons this teaches us! How guarded we should be! how careful to banish the very *first* thought of guilt—to shrink from its loathsome touch, and sternly refuse to give the thought a place in our bosoms.

He chanced to be in the county town. At the post-office a letter was handed to him, and by the peculiar fold and writing, he saw at a glance that it was from Stamps. He coolly put it in his pocket; but, when he was secure from observation, to tear it open was the work of a moment.

“Ah! now,” he exclaimed, as his eyes sparkled, “now comes the tug of war again. Billy must be paid; it must be with money. Who would think he could have the impudence to require such a thing? He expects me to fulfill my promise; but I must see them before I decide to reject his suit. Ha! ha! what a kind cousin I am! But, Billy—it will never do to make an enemy of him. He is too reckless, too bold, and would sacrifice himself and me. So I must see them.” With this determination, he walked up to the village hotel, and, leaving orders to have his horse sent to the plantation, he waited for a boat.

“I am now going on a mission new to me,” he said, as he stepped off the plank of a steamer in New Orleans. “I am now engaging in the intrigues of Cupid. Ah! and how many men have been wrecked by the soft blandishments of the little divinity; but I am bred for a sterner court, and will beware!”

With a palpitating heart he approached the hotel where the objects of his unnatural persecution were housed. He looked cautiously around him. Stamps was standing on the portico of the hotel, which over

looked the street. Suddenly his eye lit upon Talbot, and, uttering a cry of joy, he called his name, and dove down the steps, intending to pounce upon him; but the person he slapped on the shoulder, exclaiming in a voice of a high tone, "Tolly! Tolly! I am so glad to see you!" was a stranger, for Talbot had apprehended the reception, and discovered Stamps ere he had seen him; so, when he saw him descending upon him, he adroitly stepped into a hair-dressing saloon.

The looks of Stamps were woeful and blank in the extreme. He gazed in the gentleman's face a moment in amazement, and exclaimed, "Bewitched!" and then, with his head on his breast, slowly went up the steps again. But Talbot soon joined him, and told him that he had played the trick on him to avoid a public display.

"Well, you are a prudent fellow, Tolly!" he said; "you are cut out for a Talleyrand; you are a keen one," he continued, again jumping up and shaking hands with him. "Well, Tolly, how do you think I have done, eh?"

"Well, I prefer talking over our affairs in some other place than here. They will hardly bear too much light. Come, let us take a drink, and we can sit in the bar-room, out of observation."

"Agreed; though there's my room, but that's too near."

"Too near what?"

"Why, my room is too near. It is next door to it."

"It appears that you have learned some care, then," laughed Talbot.

"Well, I calculate I am learning to take care of them," he added, smiling facetiously, and grinning with a knowing leer.

"I presume they are well, and resigned."

"Oh, yes, they are hearty; but about as resigned as a perch in a bundle of dry moss."

"That is bad; but they might as well be reconciled, for they are my slaves."

"Yes," said Stamps, in a delighted manner; "and all I want, Tolly, is for you to fulfill your promise to me; then I am your friend till 'old Bones' comes."

"You may depend on me, Billy," he replied, biting his lip; "but what if I make you a proposition. What will you take to let me off? how many silver dollars?"

Stamps looked at him a moment, and a smile of scorn almost was perceptible as he replied, "Not the wealth that you own would make me give up; but there is one thing I would do."

"What is it?" asked Talbot, eagerly.

"Agree to free the girls; swear to never, in any manner, molest them; make a provision for them, and I swear never to say another word on the subject."

Talbot looked at him in surprise, to see if he was in earnest, and then exclaimed, "Hem! why, Billy! hem! ah—I don't know about that, you see."

"'You see!' yes, I see," returned Stamps, angrily. "I see that you are unwilling to do justice to these girls, and you wish to deceive me!"

"Not at all, Billy; you mistake me."

"Well, then, if I am mistaken, I will make a proposition to you, and if you hold to it, all will be well, and we are friends."

"What is it?"

"Why, the fact is, you brought these girls over here to subdue them to your wishes; and as they are situated, ruin may be their fate. If it could be otherwise, it were better; but now I make this bargain with you: Give me Zoe; you take Estelle; they are equally handsome, but I have my preference. It may be we shall both be foiled; for it is said that women have a way of their own; but, if it is a bargain, say so, and we will assist each other."

"Then," said Talbot, "I am with you in heart and soul. You for Zoe, I for Estelle. Hurra for the Holy Alliance!"

"Then here is my hand, and we will help each other. Now for another drink, and we will consider the affair closed."

Talbot now found that he had a spirit to deal with not so subservient as he had imagined, and saw he would be forced to yield, so he thought it best to do so with a good grace; but his heart was bitter toward Stamps for it. He knew, however, that he could depend on the veracity of his friend, he would not deceive him; and he accordingly determined to sacrifice his feelings to his interests.

"Come, Billy, let's walk out, and, as we go, we can talk."

The two now strolled forth, and, as they went side by side, their dreadful project was arranged.

"Now, Billy," said Talbot, "we must move cautiously in this matter, and we can succeed. Sly and sure is my motto."

"No, sirree!" said Stamps, decidedly. "Don't you see, if you are going to treat them as slaves, the way

to do it is to break down their spirits at once, and then they won't care what becomes of themselves?"

"Yes; suppose they resist?" replied Talbot, who saw, however, that there was philosophy in his argument.

"But they must yield."

"All this is very well, but I must first see them."

"That you shall soon do. Oh! Tolly, but they are lovely; remember, I own Zoe."

"Very well. When shall we see them?"

"We had better wait until it is later."

"They shall obey me; they are my property, and they shall be bent to my wishes."

"That's the way, Tolly. Use boldness, and we will succeed."

It was night in the Crescent City. There were the busy crowd in the street, the hurried chase of the giddy after pleasure in the ball-room, the merry round of revellers in the saloon, and the shout of bacchanals from the bar-rooms. There was dissipation in the lamp-lit streets, vice in the jeweled crowd, and treachery on the hearth-stone. There was sneaking murder in the darkened courts; virtue and happiness in the domestic circle.

Talbot had given himself up to the hands of the barber, and came forth from his room highly perfumed; but all the barber's art, and all the patchwork put on him, could not hide that black heart, full of wicked designs, as he presented himself, smirking, before Stamps. He arose, and after a whispered and hurried conversation, silently preceded by Talbot, they wended their way to the room occupied by Zoe and Estelle. Here Stamps took the lead.

When the door was opened, they discovered the sisters seated at a table, conversing in a low tone.

Stamps assumed a free easy tone and manner as he advanced. He presented Talbot to them as their relative. A sudden agitation seemed to take possession of them, as they confusedly arose and returned the affected salutations.

Talbot, who had counted on the swarthy complexion of the girls to give a color to his designs, was sensibly struck and astonished at their clear and brilliant color—of Estelle in particular, and he felicitated himself on his election of her instead of Zoe.

He was as much embarrassed as they, and hardly knew what to say, as they regarded him with anxious countenances.

"I am glad to welcome you back to your native soil once more," he exclaimed, holding out his hand.

"We have arrived in obedience to your summons, Mr. Talbot," said Zoe; "and we place ourselves under your protection."

"I shall be pleased to have it in my power to make you comfortable; but you must be aware that there is a change in our conditions since we parted."

"We have nothing of our own," said she; "since we are informed by Mr. Stamps that you are the heir of our father; and you then will not attempt to restrict us."

"You are vastly mistaken, Zoe. You are both entirely subject to my disposal—mine by the right of the law. It now remains to be seen if you will require harsh treatment, or will receive kindness."

"Merciful Heaven! and are we to be tortured still further?" asked she; "without friends—without home. We are poor, destitute, and wretched."

"Not so—not so," replied Talbot; "it is true that your father left his affairs in such a situation that nothing but superior management saved the property from utter ruin; still I am willing to share it with you, on one condition."

"Name it, sir," she answered, as the rich blood mounted to her forehead.

"To offer no objections to my suit, if not sanctioned by the formalities of a long and tedious courtship; ay, and to be mine without—in plain words—without the aid of a priest."

"With or without one, never, sir," she exclaimed, as she burst into tears.

"No! don't sir," said Stamps, rising. "You promised me you would not play this game—she's mine."

"Oh! you are a fool, Billy. Of course it's all in a general way. I don't want her in particular."

"Well, see that you don't. Go talk to Estelle."

Talbot bit his lips—frowned—then smiled—and turned off toward the window, whistling and gazing into the lighted streets. He, as well as Stamps, was in a fury at the obstinacy, as they termed it, of the girls. Talbot approached Estelle.

"What now, my pretty one," he said, as he sat down by her side on the sofa, and attempted to take her hand, which she withdrew; "you are mad with me."

"No, sir, I am not."

"No! then what is it?"

"Because, sir, you are too contemptible for anger."

"Ah, ha! my scornful beauty," he replied, piqued at her scorn; "I will learn you to love me. You have been allotted to me."

"You will not obtain me, then."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it."

"You are a knowing little witch," he said, in a tender manner, for he was now really affected by her piquant beauty; and he drew her suddenly to him, imprinting a kiss upon her cheek.

She drew away in disgust and anger.

"Base, unmannered hound," she said; "you are a villain."

"Oh! you are mistaken," he answered; "a mere term, however;" and here he again threw his arms around her. She again drew back, with some difficulty, enraged, and as he again attempted the same feat, she struck him with all her strength in the face. Stung by rage, he forgot himself, and the base-born scoundrel *returned the blow*.

"That was a most cowardly act!" said Stamps, turning round and looking him full in the face.

"You infernal little minx," exclaimed Talbot, "that act settles your fate. You shall either submit, or I'll put you up at auction and sell you to the highest bidder—for you are my slaves—and the law will protect me in my property. Come, Billy, let us go, and give the jades a little time for reflection. Now, hear me," he added, turning round as he reached the door; "you shall for a few days have no molestation; and I swear, if you do not yield at the end of that time, I will use the power I possess to compel you; but you will bitterly rue it, I assure you. Think," he said, tauntingly, "how you would feel to be placed on the block, by the side of a lot of fat negroes, and have your beauties exposed to the gaze of a thousand libertines."

"In the name of Heaven, go, fiend! and leave us a few hours alone. Go! and may the curse of the Protector of the fatherless cling to you!"

He retired from the door; and as he went, he uttered a low, chuckling, bitter laugh; and the poor girls, as they heard the key turn in the lock, fell into each other's arms and wept.

The next day, during the morning, Talbot entered their room again.

"Well, girls," he said, in a hypocritical voice, "I hope you have thought well of this matter; for I do not intend to trifle with you, I assure you."

"All we want," said Zoe, "is, if we are slaves, to be allowed to earn our bread; but, sir, what right have you to us? How are we slaves? Or is this only a fable of yours?"

"A fable! Well, it will prove a sad reality to you. Listen! Your mother was a *slave*—a *Quadroon slave*—in the West Indies; she was sold, and Colonel Ormond, attracted by her beauty, purchased her. They lived together as man and wife, *unmarried*. The law not allowing illegitimate children to inherit, I was the heir, and your father never having freed your mother, both *you* and *she* were slaves. You are *my* property, as you were *his*. Now do you understand?"

A deadly pallor overspread the cheek of the beautiful girl, as she followed him through to what was to her a blasting death-stroke to her hopes.

"And is this true?" she murmured, sadly.

"If there is any doubt of it—if you do doubt it at all, I can bring a lawyer who will soon satisfy you."

"Then are we lost indeed. Can this be so? Is it

true? I am surely dreaming; but no, it is a frightful reality. I remember to have heard something like this, years ago, from my father's negroes; but oh! I never dreamed it true; I was a little child then. Oh, father, father! how terrific a curse you have bequeathed to your children!"

"It is not justice," said Estelle.

"Ah, my charmer! it may not be justice, but it is law."

"Is there no help on earth for it?" asked Zoe, with horror and consternation in her countenance. "Oh! why did our Creator allow us this suffering? Why did we leave the peaceful scenes of our convent life in Paris? Oh! it is more awful than I could ever dream of. A slave! It is frightful!" And here she pressed her hands tightly over her eyes, as if it were to shut out a horrible sight. She trembled violently, and seemed to be on the point of going into hysterical convulsions.

"Come, Zoe," he said, "do not despair. I will make it as light as possible."

"Despair! it is worse than despair; it is worse than death. Slaves! Oh! the idea is awful. I shall go crazy. Come, sister," she exclaimed, "we are slaves! Come, let us go out to our labor, let us bend our knees to our master. Oh! was it for this that we were sent to school, refined, and educated—mingling with the nobility of France—the pets of the kind ladies—to be ultimately dragged into the slave market!"

"Come, Zoe," exclaimed he, again, "resign yourselves into my hands, and I will act like a man."

"Ah!" said Estelle, "if you were to act like a man,

you would let us go unharmed. You have all our father's property. Shame on the manhood of him that would claim his children as slaves !”

“Would it add to your honor,” said Zoe, “or your happiness, to bruit it abroad that you had conquered two weak and defenseless girls? Ah! if no touch of pity moves your breast, let us buy our freedom. I can give music lessons, and Estelle can sew and paint; and when the last dollar is paid, we will fall on our knees and bless you.”

“There is only one method,” he replied, coldly. “I have mentioned the way, and the time is almost out;” and here he turned to leave the room.

“One question,” said Estelle.

“What is it?”

“Are you a human being, or only a beast clothed in a human form?”

Talbot turned again without replying; he was almost frantic, and he now determined more than ever to conquer them. He paced the hall backward and forward for an hour, to cool his fevered brow, and curb his impetuous temper. Suddenly he turned, and again entered the room.

“Girls,” exclaimed he, “this is folly. Why not come to an understanding at once? We need not be enemies. Come, Estelle.” Here he whispered in her ear. As quick as a lightning's flash she leaped from her seat, and sprang back as if she had touched an adder. Her eyes flashed with anger, and her nostrils dilated with scorn.

“Base and cruel man! unnatural monster!” she exclaimed. “And would you, could you—could any man born of woman ever stoop so low? Could you forget

that there is a God above us, and then ask for such a sacrifice? Can any one calling himself a man forget honor and gratitude?" She approached him. "Sir," she continued, as she gazed steadily in his eyes, before whose pure fire his own trembled and averted their look. He seemed to see again the form of the injured Ormond, darting curses on him. "Can you forget the father of the poor child whom you would now attempt to wrong? Can you remember the time when you came to his house a stranger and in want, and then coolly and deliberately determine to crush the child of such a parent, to consign her to infamy and despair? Do you remember the pure, mild eyes of my mother? Do you remember any kindness shown to you by her? Can you remember any harshness from either, and can you now, when you remember our once happy home, can you, when the child of my parents stands tremblingly before you—a slave by an accident, and in your power—can you hesitate how to act? Oh! no, you can not—can not now doom two innocent girls, who would have met you with so much kindness, to misery and shame! Oh! no, I know you will not. Human nature is not so degraded. You will free us, and I can even think that the eyes of my mother are now cast to the throne of God, and that her harpstrings send up a blessing for you."

Talbot, as bad as he was, actually felt this pathetic appeal, and almost half relented.

A tap was heard at the door, and Stamps peered in. He entered, and advanced to the side of Zoe.

"Well, Tolly, what success?" he asked.

"None at all."

"Well, I am thinking it is time to do something

as for myself, I will have *my* reward if the gates of destruction were opened wide upon me."

"Oh! do not surrender us to that man," exclaimed Estelle, "he is a villain." This was said to Talbot.

"Alas! poor sister," replied Zoe, "you lean on a broken reed, for he is as bad as the other."

"The alternative is before you," said Talbot; "we only intend kindness."

"Kindness! yes, such kindness as the hyena shows to the trembling fawn when he is about to tear it in pieces."

"Well, then, decide," he said, petulantly; "agree to our proposal, or the auction block."

"Is there no hope?"

"None!"

"Well, leave us," replied Zoe, in tears, "leave us, and we will think and weep over this concentration of horrors."

It was in their own room, that night, that Talbot and Stamps felicitated themselves on the victory which they conceived they had gained. Talbot had a new feeling awakened in him; he had heretofore thought or cared for nothing but money. The current was now turned, and he was launched on the sea of sin; every thought and every feeling else was swallowed up in this all-absorbing theme.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“The sun
Declined, was hasting now with prone career
To th’ ocean isles, and in the ascending scale
Of heaven, the stars that usher evening rose.”
MILTON.

WHEN Mr. Herndon left home, he had not fully decided in what manner to act; but his first course was to see Mr. Bland, with whom Ormond had the conversation, and who had decided him, as has been before detailed. Here he received information enough to warrant him in pursuing his course. He learned from him the fact with surprise that Ormond had legally acknowledged the children, and legitimated them. He remained in the city several weeks instituting inquiries, and at length found the vessel in which the voyage was made to Porto Rico. The captain confirmed him in his suspicions, and offered him every assistance in his power.

He therefore set sail with him, and at the time he was leaving the mouth of the Mississippi river, Zoe and Estelle, under convoy of Stamps, entered it. We will not follow him in his inquiries, but state that he found a vessel sailing for Martinique, in Havana.

He reached that island, and there learned to his inexpressible delight that Ormond had fully performed his promise—that the wife of his friend was free, and

the children legitimated, and that no stain of Quadroon blood tainted them. Oh! how his heart bounded, and his soul was lifted up in gratitude to that mysterious Providence which had directed him aright in his course; and how, lava-like, his blood boiled in his veins when he thought of the usurper Talbot, and of the poor children whom he was not to see righted. With what joy he grasped the documents, copies of the records; and how gayly he stepped to the hotel to hide the precious papers in his portfolio.

It was the evening before the vessel sailed on its return that Herndon was stepping on board with his luggage. A large American vessel was just coming into the harbor, and he gazed proudly at the starry flag, as it waved in massive folds on the evening air. The anchor was dropped, and in a few moments a boat was seen to pull from the sides, and approach the shore. In the stern-sheets sat two figures which attracted his attention. He kept his look fastened on the approaching boat. It appeared that the figures were not unfamiliar to his eye. He looked more steadily, and as the boat drew nearer, he could have almost shouted with agitation. There were two known faces. One was Grant—but that was impossible. Still, there he was, now more distinct. Herndon shut his eyes—it was an illusion. He feared to open them. The boat passed around the bow. He could not prevent it—his tongue involuntarily shouted—

“Doctor!”

The person looked up steadily for a moment, then hastily said, “Hold on! stop pulling!”

“Are you Dr. Grant?” asked Herndon, in a trembling voice.

"Herndon! by the God of war!" shouted the doctor, for it was he. In a moment he was on board; and the two long separated friends pressed each other in a close and hearty embrace. Smiles and tears were mingled. Smiles of happiness, and tears of sorrow as old reminiscences were disentombed from the grave of feeling. Louis Lamotte was the other stranger, and he shared in the common joy.

A few moments sufficed to explain their relative positions; and a few moments more to transfer the baggage to the vessel to sail in the morning. Herndon had completed the business, and there was now no necessity for remaining longer. They sailed, and mutual explanations occupied them for a number of days.

For several days Talbot refrained from visiting the persecuted orphans, save at meal times; for he found all his efforts to subdue them unavailing. They resisted every art; and at the end of the time he was fain to confess himself vanquished. He took immediate steps to transfer them from the hotel, but had not decided whether to take them to the plantation, or to a furnished room in the lower portion of the city.

The rain poured in torrents—the streets were deluged with water—and almost impassable. Dark and lowering clouds hung heavily over the city. None were out on such a night, save the lurking thief—the outcast—and the wanderer. Even the drowsy watchmen had stowed themselves away in warm corners, snugly to sleep off the storm, and leave the good city to take care of itself.

Talbot and Stamps were treading the dark streets toward the hotel. They had been in the lower por-

tion of the city to look at an old mansion which was for rent. Along the dismal and rank-smelling streets they trod. The current of poverty and wretchedness was flowing at this dark hour. There was the drunken sailor, reeling along with his last wages spent in grog; and the low debauchee, making night odious with his songs; and there were the women of the street, with their scanty and flimsy dresses, their glaring red cheeks, and blood-shot eyes—the grog-shop pets. Children too, of tender age—children of crime and of wretchedness, with cunning imprinted in old lines on their young faces, were there, with their hardened little countenances; and there was the sound of the pot-house dance, the violence, the laugh, the unchaste tongue, and the oath.

The two friends passed on hastily, with downcast heads, avoiding the driving rain, and shrinking at each successive peal of thunder, which now shook the city to its trembling center.

Before them moves slowly a female form. At their approach, she stops and looks around. She was a tall commanding figure, and by the lightning's glare they could see that her hair was disheveled, and a stream of water was running down her face. She was bare-headed; and her dress, which had once been of some thin material, was now draggled, wet, and muddy. She had evidently once been handsome.

"Who are you?" she asked; "and what want you with a forlorn vagrant."

"Who are you?" replied Talbot, in return.

"I am what crime makes women," she replied; and her voice was low, tremulous, and not unmusical.

"What is your name?"

"I have none. It was buried many years since, with my honor."

Talbot turned to his companion, and whispered, "We may make something of this;" then turning, exclaimed, "my good woman, you appear distressed, and cold, and wet. Would you like a good situation, to make yourself an honest woman again."

She gazed at him; and it appeared that she did not comprehend the question; for it had to be repeated ere she replied,

"I have been the sport of fortune too long now to be duped by you. Leave me alone, and go your way."

"But you do not comprehend me. Will you, if I clothe and feed you—will you serve me?"

"Food!" she cried, wildly; "food! oh! I will do any thing for food."

"Well, follow me."

"Are you crazy?" said Stamps; "what do you want with this night hag?"

"Billy, I have a head which has brought me through many an intricate plot; see now if I don't turn this to advantage."

"How?"

"Come on, come on; walk faster."

The poor creature mechanically obeyed the voice of her conductor, and painfully followed them. As they passed a small grocery, at the window of which was still a light, he paused and there procured a portion of food for the miserable being. She devoured with the eagerness which famine can only give the bread and other articles furnished; and then, when she had finished, gazed wistfully around.

"Let her have it," said Talbot, who stood, by and had been looking at her in astonishment.

"What?" said the shopman.

"Give her liquor; do you not see what she needs." The shopman smiled at the penetration of Talbot, and poured out for her a half tumbler full of raw brandy. She swallowed it without any hesitation, uttered a deep sigh of pleasure, then arose and looked up at Talbot. "Have you finished?" he asked. A nod of assent was given, he threw down a piece of money on the counter and turned away. The storm continued, and they again plunged into the darkness.

Some time elapsed and they reached the hotel. It was late, and the private entrance for ladies was closed. A ruse was planned. Stamps went up to their room and brought down his cloak; this was thrown over the shoulders of the exhausted woman, and thus under cover concealing the wet and soiled dress, she was introduced into the hotel and into Stamps's room.

Caution was given to her not to speak; a few bed-clothes made into a pallet on the floor, and the wretch was soon sleeping soundly.

"Well, now for your explanation," said Stamps, the next morning, as they descended the steps to the bar-room for their bitters.

"Listen, then;—this is a woman who is perfectly dependent on us; she is a beggar, and we can use her in every sense; she will be a watchguard on the girls; no one can approach them; and when we leave the house, we will leave a good deputy. We can attach her to our interests, and she can work on their feelings as a woman only knows how. We can mold them to

our wishes through her, and prevent them from holding communication with any one. Do you now see the cream of the idea?"

"I do; and I acknowledge it will be a most excellent thing; for, as you say, by introducing her as their attendant we will have another fast friend, and a spy in the camp."

After breakfast, Talbot went out and purchased clothing for their acquisition, so as to introduce her suitably to Zoe and Estelle. The articles were brought in, and as he left the room he exclaimed—

"Come, rig yourself out, now, and when you have finished I wish to talk with you; I am going to present you to some ladies this morning, who need an attendant."

In an hour he returned, and found her attired in a decent manner. A remarkable change had occurred in her; she, instead of resembling what she had been, now seemed a decent serving-woman.

"What is your name?" he asked, as he threw himself in a chair. The woman studied a moment and then replied,

"You can call me Catherine, sir."

"Catherine what?"

"Catherine Nothing."

"Very well, Mrs. Catherine Nothing, wife of a bankrupt tradesman, forced to seek a place, now you are aware that I know what you are?"

"It is probable."

"Very good again; I want you to attend on two young ladies; they are my favorites, and I want them well watched. Can you do it?"

"I can do any thing to keep out of the street."

"That is good; here is plenty of gold;" and he drew out his purse, through the green silk net-work of which the metal shone. "Only be faithful, and whatever you want you shall have."

"I will be faithful."

"Now I will tell you—these girls are in my power, and they are perverse; they yield to me when death comes, not before. I want their feelings wrought upon, and wish them bent to my wishes; they are mine; more I will tell you another time. Can you undertake it?"

"I can, and will promise obedience. I was ruined; why should I not lend my aid to ruin others. I will and can assist you."

"You will obey me, then, in all things?"

"I swear it."

"Then say what you wish, and if you keep your promise faithfully; you shall never want; I understand that you are mine to obey?"

"I am."

"I wish to subdue these girls; more you will learn anon; do you comprehend me?"

"I were an idiot did I not."

"Then follow me." He led the way, and she followed. At the door he paused and turned; a look of authority directed to her and a motion to come nearer was given.

"Remember," said he, in a low voice.

"Never fear," she answered, as a look of peculiar intelligence shot from her dull eyes.

"Zoe, I have brought you and Estelle an attendant she is faithful; treat her kindly."

"We feel obliged to you," she replied, "but could have done without this mark of your attention."

He turned and looked at the woman. He noticed a deep forbidding expression pass over her features; he was satisfied; he knew that Zoe had made an enemy. He saw the angry spot pass over her cheek, the eye kindle, and he knew that she was faithful.

The day arrived again, and a carriage was drawn up at the private entrance of the hotel, as Talbot escorted the two girls and their servant down to the vehicle, and entered it with them. Their state-rooms had been secured by Stamps on the steamer, and to it they were driven. The servant was faithful; she was just the being Talbot wanted; deep and impassable, unprincipled, and unfeeling. She who had been deceived now gloried in leading on to ruin an innocent girl. It was an especial pleasure for her to sit and gaze on them, to see their smooth cheeks and elegant forms, and to calculate how much suffering and time it would require to dim the brightness of those orbs, to hollow those cheeks, and place the seal of despair on those brows. She gloried in such work, and Talbot could not have found a more fitting agent. She duly reported all that was said and done by them, and a sigh could not have been drawn, a murmur whispered, or a pearly tear be shed, but it was regularly chronicled to head-quarters. She tried to conciliate them at first, but met with a cold repulse, and therefore tried no more. They did not treat her unkindly, but were not free in their intercourse with her, and at the same time expressed to her their feelings in regard to their situation.

They approached what had once been their home. The oak-trees waved their branches still, but mournfully; and the flowers bloomed, but from amid the

rank grass. There was a welcome, but a sad one. No one knew them when they walked up the avenue to their father's dwelling; the servants who had nursed them in childhood knew them no more. They were kept in strict seclusion; even old Sylvia was not allowed to see them, and no servant knew that their master's children were in the house, prisoners, and under a cruel tyrant. None had access to them but through Catherine, who attended to them and their room.

Another attack was made upon them now, but without success. Talbot even offered them their freedom, but they had rather be bond-slaves and live with honor, than be free without it, and his suit and offer were rejected with disdain.

Talbot had thought well of what he was about to do; he had built up an edifice of villainy, and was now about to put on the crowning stone. He had sworn a deep revenge, and vowed to sell the girls as slaves at auction, and he would not forego it. When informed of his final determination, they silently wept, but spoke not a word, well knowing how vain were words of petition to him, who seemed not to possess the ordinary feelings of humanity. Stamps entirely coincided with Talbot in his views, and agreed to go up to a parish town where there were negro sales the first Monday in every month, to make arrangements with the vendor to have Zoe and Estelle offered at the same time.

Talbot knew he had a desperate game to play, and he would have receded from the step, but he was aware that it was death to retrograde, and his revenge would be unaccomplished.

A week elapsed, and Stamps had returned. There was to be a large sale of negros, and he had made arrangements with the auctioneer to offer them for sale.

A last offer was made to them; but they remained firm, and preserved their virtue.

The reader may wonder why such an idea as selling the girls ever entered his head.

There are some spirits so perverse, some so refined in their cruelty, that common mortals can not conceive the incomings and outgoings of their minds; and he knew that by their actually being sold at a public sale it would forever bar the claim set up by them for their father's property, and its very boldness would prevent opposition. He would be revenged nobly, amply. At any rate, he had been foiled, cut in his most tender point, and he determined to carry it out. Accordingly, Colonel Ormond's carriage, which had never been used since his death, was drawn out, and put in repair.

The day came; it was yet the gray of the morning, and the poor orphans were placed in the carriage, to be carried to the sacrifice. Talbot went with them, and Stamps rode by their side; thus they set forth. Catherine went also; even she was touched with pity at the sacrifice, and would have retracted if she could.

Talbot gloried in his power; but there was an eye which watched these proceedings, and an arm ready to avenge them. There were rescuers near; their prayer was answered. Pierre had listened to the conversation between him and Stamps when they thought no mortal ear heard them. He knew the girls, he heard the whole plot, he saw them set forth, and he

patiently waited for the arrival of Mr. Herndon. A tale he had to tell: for many a night had he silently sneaked beneath the window or behind doors, and had eagerly drank in all the plot.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Destruction! swift destruction!

Fall on my coward head, and make my name

The common scorn of fools, if I forgive him."

VENICE PRESERVED.

WHEN the girls awoke in the town in which they had arrived the night previous, it was morning. They found their own clothes gone, and a couple of coarse calico dresses substituted in their stead. Catherine coolly informed them that they were the ones in which they were to appear. When they looked out through the windows of their sleeping apartment on the bright skies, heard the little birds gayly singing among the branches of the trees, and saw all nature refreshed and joyous, they turned sick at heart, and Zoe came near fainting. They thought they had summoned courage enough to meet their fate, but nature would prevail.

Zoe looked on her sister sadly, and bitterly smiled as she donned her garb. "These are our robes of slavery, sister."

"Yes," replied Estelle; "but, sister, I feel lighter at heart this morning than usual. It may be that I am going mad, or it may be faith—I feel that God will not, at the last moment, permit this sacrifice. You taught me the faith in our God, sister."

Zoe looked earnestly at Estelle; she trembled, for

she feared that the sparkle of the eye was the symptom of incipient madness.

"You doubt my sanity, sister; but do not fear."

"Why is this strange gayety, Estelle?" said she, as she tenderly took her hand.

"Sister," she replied, earnestly, "I have had a dream. I thought our dear mother stood beside my bed, and soothed my brow, as she was wont to do in other days, and she smiled benignly on me. Her form was bright as the rays of heaven's own light, and as she spoke, her voice resembled the tones of a lute. She softly breathed, 'I am with you, my child; it is power given by God to me to be ever with you in spirit. I am always with you, guarding you from danger. Be of good cheer: this is a trial, but all will go well.' This said, she slowly faded away. I then thought that I sat in our dear old garden, here at home, listening to the gentle swell of the summer wind, and that there was a sound of sweet, soft music—oh! so sweet and pure—and that it was our mother's prayer, ascending to God for us."

The tears streamed from Zoe's eyes, as she listened to the simple and pathetic recital; and, as she clasped her in her arms, she exclaimed, "Oh! God, this is too much, too much! Oh! father, mother, little dreamed you of this!"

"Come, come, girls!" sharply cried the woman, who, during all this time, had stood by without a muscle in her countenance betraying a single emotion, "you must be getting ready. If you don't, I will be blamed."

They silently obeyed her, with streaming eyes.

"Sister," exclaimed Estelle, "I can not help feeling

that there is more in my dream than it seems. I feel confident that this most monstrous villainy will not be allowed to go on."

"Ah! dear Estelle, do not buoy yourself up with hopes, which, like bubbles, will burst. Oh! no, we are doomed."

"All the help you will get," exclaimed the discordant voice of the woman, "will be that some gay young gentleman, who has got more money than brains, will buy you, defy laws, and make ladies of you. And why should they not? others as good have been ruined."

They turned pale at this unfeeling speech; they strongly compressed their lips, and then merely said, "God help us!"

"Oh! yes, He can if He will, but He ain't a-goin' to. Why did n't He help me fifteen years ago, when I was young, and innocent, and pretty? Ay, pretty! you need not look so. I was young and pretty once; the roses bloomed on my cheek, and my young heart was uncrushed, and the earth was bright and lovely, and a song was ever on my lips. But my poor old mother died. She is in heaven now, God bless her; and I was deceived. Then, when the odor was taken from the flower; when the roses were all withered up, the thorns were left—the young heart was blighted. Then, then I was turned out into the streets of Boston, to beg, or starve, or steal, or do worse. Ay, and I did do *worse*, and—and I became what I am, and have been ever since, and always will be! Yes! I say, why should you not be what I am. You are nothing but women. Why should not the well-stream of your affections be dried up, and your young feel-

ings blighted, your hopes cut short, and the golden fruits of the autumn of your life be turned to bitter ashes?"

"Oh! hush! in the name of our holy mother!" exclaimed Zoe, putting her hands to her ears.

"Ah! well, if it will do you any good, I will hush; but you will find it is the best way to give in at once. It ain't no use to struggle against it; it's fate. Others have had to do the same. If I could save you, I would, but I can't; and—there comes my master," she added, hastily.

Talbot now entered the room, accompanied by Stamps and another person. He seemed to be a planter, for he was dressed in plain clothes, and carried a riding-whip. But there was a look of manly independence about him which compared favorably with the others. He started with surprise when he saw the girls.

"Are these the Quadroons you mean?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Yes," replied Talbot, "these two. Come, stand up here, Zoe; you and Estelle. Pretty good-looking, ain't they?" he added, with a sly wink at the stranger. He had been drinking very freely that morning.

"Yes, they are remarkably pretty; and I do not know what to think of it. They are as white as you or myself."

"Oh! as to that, here are the papers," he said, taking out a bundle; "here is the certificate of the parish judge and clerk of the court."

"Well, that is all right," he replied, "but they are too pretty to sell. I would free them, and so would any other man."

"I will not, though ! I can't afford to lose on them."

"Of course any man has a right to do as he chooses with his own property."

Talbot was acting the brutal negro-trader, and he did it to perfection. He did not really wish to sell them then, but he thought it would add another pang to the hearts of the persecuted children, to be handled like beasts by strange, unfeeling hands. He wished the pleasure, the revenge of exhibiting them before low-bred, unfeeling overseers and traders. He gloried in tearing their young hearts with agony. He ordered them to rise again. Zoe did so, but Estelle obstinately refused to leave her seat. He walked across the room, and, seizing her by the arm, forcibly jerked her up. The sudden motion caused all her long, dark hair to fall showering over her shoulders. She resisted, and gathered up the tresses in her hand. He was furious with passion and liquor.

"Oh ho !" he exclaimed, "your hair is too troublesome ; here, I will soon relieve you of it ;" and, seizing her long, beautiful hair in his hands, at the back of her head, he called for a pair of scissors. Catherine brought them, and, with a few cuts, he severed it, or the greater portion of it, close to her head, and threw it on the floor.

"Unmanly coward !" cried Zoe ; but she checked herself, remembering her situation.

"It appears to me that you have done the lowest trick I ever saw a man do even if they are niggers," exclaimed the stranger ; "and you ought to be put in their place, you rascal, and whipped to death." And here he put his hands in his pockets, and left the room.

Talbot was in a moment heartily ashamed of his

act; and would have given much to recall it; but he resolved to brave it through; and busting into a hoarse laugh, he followed the other from the room.

Stamps remained behind, leaning against the chimney-piece. He had witnessed the act, and stood gazing on the floor. At length he looked up, and sighed deeply. "Well, all I wish is, that I had never had any thing to do with this—and with such a man." Zoe heard him, and her heart fluttered with agitation. She turned her eyes toward him a moment, and tremblingly exclaimed—"Oh, sir, your heart is touched at our distress. Will you assist us?"

"My poor girl," he replied, "it is too late for me to do any thing now, if I felt inclined. . When I went to Paris after you was the time." After a pause, he continued, "I once thought I could look unmoved on any thing; but when I saw that man go up to that poor child, and, like a malicious devil, cut off her hair; and she, an uncomplaining angel, not to say a word, or make a motion, but look so sorrowful and pitiful, like a lamb that the butcher's bloody hands are upon, that touched me; and I repeat, that I am sorry that I ever lent my aid to any such a scheme; and if there is a God, he will punish it."

"Oh, do not doubt it!" exclaimed Zoe; "do not doubt it; there is a great and good Father above us all. Oh, do help us, and he will bless you."

"Tut, tut," replied the woman; "keep still; and you," she remarked to him; "you are a pretty fellow to stir up a rebellion among your friend's property."

"Come, Catherine!" he said, "you have been badly treated, but you have no feeling. You are a fit match for Talbot."

"I glory in the depravity of human nature," she replied, exultingly; "you are a milk-sop by the side of him. I was not depraved when a child; and I want to see misery for misery."

"That may be a very good doctrine," he remarked, "but not one that is preached by good men."

"There is nothing good in this world," she said; "nothing! but what did you call that man Talbot for? Why harrow up my soul with that name that I hoped was dead? You call him Tolly."

"That is a nick-name; but what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! only that was the name of a happy family before ruin came into it."

"Where?"

"In the whitened sepulcher of Boston."

"Did you live there?"

"I did."

"Is Catherine your real name?"

"It was not."

"What was it?"

"Nancy."

"You are Talbot's sister," he exclaimed, as he rushed from the room. In a few moments Talbot entered. His face was pale, and his teeth were clinched upon his whitened lips.

"Woman," he said, sternly, approaching her, "I learn that your name is Talbot."

"Yes."

"You lived in Boston?"

"Yes."

"Nancy Talbot was your mother."

"Yes."

"Then you are my sister."

"I suppose so."

"I have found a nice relation."

"And I."

"No recrimination. I have played a horrid and unnatural part."

"When this scene is acted I shall die—the avenging finger of God is upon *you*."

"I believe you are more sinned against than sinning, Nancy." He went hastily down stairs.

"There is no hope," sighed Zoe.

"None, none!" echoed Estelle.

The day wore on. Zoe was sad and uncomplaining, Estelle in tears.

Nancy, whom we will now call by her proper name, sat in a corner, with a handkerchief over her head. She was silent, and would reply to no questions.

Estelle was nervous and excited; and kept constantly going to the window, as if she was expecting some person.

Talbot had been in and out several times. He had drank freely, and his face was flushed. He seemed to be losing his accustomed sagacity. He would approach Nancy—gaze at her—seem to be moved—then, as if he would spurn her with his foot, turn off to Estelle. In going down the steps he met Stamps.

"Tolly," said he, "I have urged you all along to go through with this matter; but I feel this morning as I never felt before. The poor things look so pitiful—so helpless and unprotected—that I can not help feeling for them."

"Why, you are turning to be a soft, putty-headed fool," he replied, with a smile of contempt. "What

has got into you, Billy? Are you going to join the church? Are you afraid?"

"Tolly, you know I am not. Where hard knocks are going, there I'll never flinch; but I don't like this."

"Your conversion is sudden," replied Talbot, enraged.

"So was Saul's. I only wish mine had been earlier. Tolly, you may do what you please, but I'll be hanged if I move another peg in the affair."

"Well, I'll carry it on myself, then," he answered, turning off abruptly. "Even the devil is against me," he muttered, as he walked slowly back.

There was, as we have said, a number of negroes belonging to a succession, to be sold at the Court House this day; and the sale had been extensively advertised.

There were many planters and others in town, and more constantly coming in.

The sale began. Many negroes were sold, but it was the mere changing one home for another, only the transfer of a negro from one plantation to another, where the same rights and privileges were allowed them. Whole families were sold together, not separate, as some have averred. Many persons had come to the sale for the purpose of purchasing, and others for sight-seeing; many to compare notes on their crops, and take a friendly drink; and some to electioneer. But others had heard of the sale, and had come for the purpose of seeing the two beautiful Quadroon girls, whose fame had gone abroad. The sale proceeded, and, finally, the first crowd of negroes were sold. The auctioneer now informed Talbot, who

stood by, that he must bring out his slaves. His heart beat fast, and he felt that if he could have crept out of it, he would have done so. "Are they not my slaves?" he muttered, as he walked toward the hotel; "at least, until some one takes the trouble of finding out the truth."

It was not many minutes ere he entered the room. The girls sat hand in hand, with cheeks from which every vestige of color had fled. When they saw him Estelle uttered a scream, and both trembled violently.

"Will you agree to my terms now?" he asked, tauntingly.

Zoe looked at her sister inquiringly.

"*Non pas; en Dieu est mon espoir,*" she said.

Zoe turned to him, and replied, calmly, "No, sir; do your worst."

"Then, come," he answered; "the auction block is ready for you."

Both arose. Zoe laughed hysterically, but he seized her by the arm, and forced her forward.

"You scorned me," said he; "now comes my time."

Your revenge is terrible, Talbot; but do not tell how you treated the children of your benefactor, for it may be the means of preventing some other Ormond from helping another fellow-creature in distress; it will make men lose confidence in human nature.

They left the room. Nancy sprung up from her seat; her eyes sparkled wildly, and she stretched forth her skinny hand in a menacing attitude.

"You go to your death!" she exclaimed, with the air of a prophetess.

"All are turning fools," he answered; while she stood gazing after them, as they slowly went down the steps.

Stamps paced hurriedly back and forth in his own room; he was in a state of violent agitation.

Talbot walked first, with the papers proving the girls to be of negro descent, and slaves, and his property; while they followed slowly, with downcast heads, behind him.

When they came up to the stand, expressions of astonishment greeted them from the group assembled there, and murmurs of surprise were audible, mingled with those of distrust.

"These girls are white women!" shouted some one in the crowd.

"The owner is present," answered the auctioneer; "and here, in my hands, I hold his titles to the property."

"Read them! read them!" cried several.

The auctioneer here read the certificates, which really proved the property to be his.

"It's a terrible shame!" cried some one.

Talbot was exceedingly alarmed.

"There is no mistake about it," said the auctioneer; "they are the children of a white man by a Quadroon woman; it is all fair, but they ought to be free; the papers are right. Come, up with the eldest one."

Zoe was lifted up on the stand, and made to pull off her bonnet. There stood the tenderly-raised girl, the refined and cultivated lady, exposed for public sale, and the blush of shame called to her cheek by the licentious and bold gaze of a hundred men. She

could not speak, her tongue grew thick, and her brain denied her eyes the power of performing their office; a misty haze fell upon her senses; the agony of ages was concentrated in a single moment of time. She was supported by the assistant auctioneer; every thing was dark around her; eager eyes were bent on her as the auctioneer proceeded and descanted on her beauty and fine form.

"How much am I offered for this girl, only eighteen years old, and a full guaranty as to title? One thousand dollars! only one thousand!"

Eleven hundred was offered by a rakish-looking old fellow, who took snuff, and had an accent like a London cockney.

As she composed herself, her eyes were bent on the crowd; eagerly she sought for some friendly face, but although there were many noble countenances in the assembly, many of whom expressed sympathy, yet surprise at her extreme beauty kept them silent.

Twelve, thirteen hundred dollars were successively bid—the poor girl gasped for breath. The bids were not animated; they seemed to come reluctantly; discontent was manifest, and a low murmuring was discernible. At first it was feeble, but it gathered strength as it proceeded.

"Fourteen hundred dollars!" cried a young planter, whose gaze was fixed on her.

"We will stop this sale!" cried one.

"She can not be a slave!" said another.

"We can not allow this sale to proceed!" exclaimed a tall, noble-looking man.

"Upon what ground do you enjoin it?" asked the auctioneer.

A faintness came over Zoe.

"Because we believe there is rascality in the affair."

"Fifteen hundred dollars! A splendid sempstress, and fully guaranteed; first-rate hairdresser. Fifteen hundred and fifty! Worth double the money!"

A pause followed.

"Sixteen hundred dollars! Can read and write."

"Stop! we will investigate this affair."

"Here are the papers; the owner is well known as a wealthy planter."

"Damn the papers! damn the owner!"

The crowd now grew noisy, and it was plainly perceptible that there would be a riot.

"Order, gentlemen, order!"

Curses and loud exclamations were heard, and the tumult was so great as to preclude all possibility of the sale proceeding.

"Mr. Sheriff!" cried the auctioneer, "I call on you to keep the peace."

"Damn the sheriff! If she is a slave, we will buy and free her," shouted one.

"Yes, yes!"

"Order! order!"

"Ask the girl some questions," cried one.

"Yes, yes; that's the ticket!"

"Are you a slave or not?" asked a gentleman.

The poor girl trembled violently; she tried to speak; her lips moved; a deadly paleness came over her features, and she fell back in a death-like swoon.

Just as the tumult was at its greatest height, the sound of horses' feet were heard, and down the road came a band of men, enveloped in a cloud of dust.

They came thundering up, and into the crowd, which scattered right and left.

"Hold!" exclaimed a deep voice from among the horsemen. The speaker made his way to the stand, and leaped from his steed, while the crowd gave way, as the others followed his example.

"God has heard our prayer! Oh, mother, you have done this!" cried Estelle, as she fell into the arms of Dr. Grant—for it was he. Upon the scaffold was Louis Lamotte; he was supporting the insensible form of Zoe.

"Dear Zoe!" he cried, pressing her convulsively to his bosom, "awake! awake! you are saved! you are among your friends."

"Where is the atrocious scoundrel?" cried Mr. Herndon, seeking Talbot in the crowd. So absorbed had been every person present, that they had not given any attention to Talbot during this extraordinary scene. He was now sought, but was not to be seen. "Help me to seek him, gentlemen," said Mr. Herndon. "When we have secured him, we will explain it all."

The crowd now scattered through the town to search for him. The excitement was intense, and maledictions resounded from all sides.

Talbot, however, was off. A negro stated that he had just come in town with a team, and that a man on horseback had passed him at full speed, going toward the river. A party of armed men instantly mounted, and started in pursuit.

"Five thousand dollars," cried Dr. Grant, "to the man who catches him alive."

The crowd spurred on, with a stern determination

to wreak on him their vengeance. Mr. Herndon followed after them. He was bent upon capturing him alive, to inflict on him the most terrible punishment.

Zoe had by this time recovered, and hid her face in Louis's bosom. They were taken toward the hotel.

"Where is the other villain?" asked Dr. Grant.

"He is at the hotel," replied Zoe.

Immediately a rush was made to prevent his escape. The building was surrounded, and several men went to the room. It was secured. They demanded admittance, but no answer was returned. A threat to break in the door was answered by a scornful laugh; and then the wild gibbering of a female voice was heard, as if from a lunatic.

Stamps was in the room, however. He had seen the horsemen when they passed the hotel, and he knew the game was up. He knew he had to die or be imprisoned, and he preferred the former. He would not yield.

When the threat of opening the door by force was made, he remained silent; but when blows began to resound through the house, he called out, "Hold!" and sprang at once into the gallery which overlooked the street. The crowd received him with cheers of derision, and shouts of execration.

He stood calmly, with his hands folded over his breast, and returned back the look of scorn fearlessly. If ever he did look nobly, it was then, as he there stood, confronting the angry crowd, cool and collected, gazing defiance below.

"Shoot him!" cried one; and several pistols were drawn to execute the order; but they were struck up, and exploded harmlessly in the air. Stamps moved

not, as the balls whistled past him, and struck the splinters from the weather-boarding behind him. He was calm, and a look of cold contempt was upon his lips. Not a muscle quivered, as the terrible cry rang out from the maddened mob.

"He's game, at any rate," said an old backwoodsman.

"We will give him a warmer death than that!" cried Dr. Grant, now appearing from the hotel.

"Burn him! burn him alive!" shouted a voice.

"Hold, a moment!" cried Stamps. The angry crowd sank into a gentle murmur.

"I know very well that I will never leave here alive. I know that I am bound to die; but it will never be by your hands. My neck was never formed for a halter, or my form for the torch. Singly, I would cope with any one of you here; but you are *all* against me."

"We'll see, we'll see!" they cried. "Run up, and break open the door. We will prevent his escape that way."

"Wait! don't give yourselves any trouble!" he exclaimed, with a sneering smile. Here he drew a pistol from his bosom, and, coolly cocking it, placed it to his head. He gazed upward for a moment; his lips moved; a cry of horror rang through the mass, and fifty arms were stretched out, as if to grasp the weapon. His finger moved convulsively, and a report was heard. He sprang upward, and then fell heavily on the floor. His brains were spattered against the wall.

"Behold the finger of God!" cried a female voice; and a maniac appeared by the side of the bloody corpse.

A deep groan resounded through the crowd, and they silently dispersed, with a chill of horror at the tragedy.

It will interest the reader to know how our friends happened to arrive so opportunely.

Upon reaching New Orleans, they took the first boat up-stream, and arrived just two days after Talbot had taken the girls away, as has been detailed. Mr. Herndon sought Pierre, who informed him of the whole plot; and the three at once left, post haste, in pursuit. They traveled all night, and only stopped to procure fresh horses and food. They thus arrived in time to prevent the devilish designs of Talbot.

The reunited friends occupied the parlor of the hotel, and the sweet communion of souls soon relieved them of the horrible feeling which oppressed them. The events of the past years were not touched upon; that was reserved for another time. They questioned the girls about their late adventures only enough to understand the conduct of Talbot. With reserve and diffidence Zoe hid every thing of a gross nature, but said enough to make them comprehend the designs of the man whom their father had taken by the hand.

"The plan was well conceived," said the doctor, "and came very nearly being well executed; but they will overtake him doubtless, and I am afraid Herndon will kill him. You can never sufficiently thank Mr. Herndon for the interest he has taken in you."

To return to Talbot. He had seen with intuitive tact, long before the scene of the arrival, that matters were drawing to a culminating point. He saw that a scene was to be enacted, and he did not wish to be

present at the close of the drama; he was perfectly unmanned, and desired only to get away, leaving Stamps to settle the matter as best he might.

Therefore, when the tumult was at its greatest height, and he saw up the road the dust rising as of a troop riding swiftly, the horrible and fearful truth flashed across his mind; he mounted the nearest horse and sped swiftly away; trees, fences, and fields were passed; they shot by him like lightning. He urged the horse to the top of his speed. He strained his ears, and fancied he could hear the sounds of pursuit. Again he pressed his horse and left behind him his foes and his fears. He was returning by the same road which his pursuers came; they had entered the town by different roads, and thus he luckily avoided a meeting. Again he pressed his jaded horse, and away he flew. He gazed behind him, no one was in sight—but his steed was flagging. He listened; there were sounds of the rapid tread of horses, and the voices of men. There was no doubt of it—he was pursued. A cold sweat broke out over his body; he clung to the mane of his horse; he ventured to turn in his saddle; he could see them; there they were, one, two, three, four—seven men, and riding as if for life; frantically he cheered his now nearly exhausted horse. There is no way of escaping—the road was long and straight, and a high fence bounded either side. He gives himself up for lost, but no! Oh! blessed sight; the Mississippi is in view. He gazed at the waving trees on the opposite shore. Never did the children of Israel long to place the Red Sea between Pharoah's host and themselves and be in safety more fervently than did he long to be beyond the river. He could

hear their shouts, and in the front rank was Herndon; they were nearing him.

With frenzy he pressed his horse—the river bank was reached—his horse staggered and fell dead. It was the work of a moment to leap from his back, and jump into a small skiff which lay near the shore. He seized an oar, and shoved it out in the stream.

As the current floated him away, the pursuing party reached the bank.

How they cursed and raved. He tried with the one oar to pull further out, but was unused to manage a boat. The wind was very strong, and she shipped several waves as she fell into the trough. It was blowing up stream, and this made it much rougher than it would have been.

“Shoot him, before he gets too far!” said some one.

“No, no! let us catch him alive,” cried another.

“Ride down below, and get a skiff; he has only got one oar, and can’t get away,” cried Herndon.

A pistol was fired at him, and the ball made music close to his ears. Another pistol was fired, but the bullet passed far away.

The wind now increased, and suddenly came around. The veering of the wind made the waves run very high; and now a new danger awaited him. He was out of all fear of pursuit; but a pistol ball might strike him. The worst danger now was the waves. The skiff shipped more and more water. She became heavy, and broke through the waves, instead of riding them. He jumped up in the boat, terrified, for he could not swim. With no oars to steady the boat, she was at every dash of the roughened water dancing like a feather, or down in a deep trough; and every

wave which broke over her side threw more water into her. She was half full.

Another pistol was fired. A yell of agony broke from him; the bullet had taken effect in his shoulder. He was standing—the oar was dropped—the blood spouted. At this moment a large wave lifted the boat and dashed her in the hollow. He lost his balance and fell overboard. He uttered a cry of despair as he sank; but he arose, and the water was stained with blood. With terror in his strained eye-balls, he shrieked for help on shore. A laugh of derision was his only answer. He tried to grasp the boat, which, now lightened of his weight, danced merrily, just out of his reach. Several times did he almost grasp it; but he was as often foiled. His strength gave way. He turned a beseeching glance toward the shore. He uttered a last scream as he sunk, and the water gurgled around him. And thus he died, with the spirit of the injured Ormond hanging around him, and dragging him down, down, down.

We have done. The next day, the party left for the rightful home of the children of the noble Ormond; and in a few weeks a happy bridal party filled the old parish church. The principals were Louis and Zoe.

They took up their residence in the home of their childhood. They revisited old scenes, and reveled in unforgotten haunts. They passed many an hour by the side of the little stream from the lake, where, when children, they had gathered wild-flowers in spring; and beneath the shade of the old trees where they had reposed long, long ago; but the voices of love and affection were silenced. The old arms of the oaks waved again and welcomed them; and under their

shadow were two green hillocks of earth. The same summer wind breathed its melancholy tones through the branches, and filled the air with its leafy music, as in times of yore. There were the same blue clouds floating in the heavens; and the same mocking-birds trilled out their exquisite notes; but the sweet voices of parental tenderness were absent. They were not there. Those tones which had filled their hearts with joy were silent; the pulses still—the silver cord was broken.

But enough.

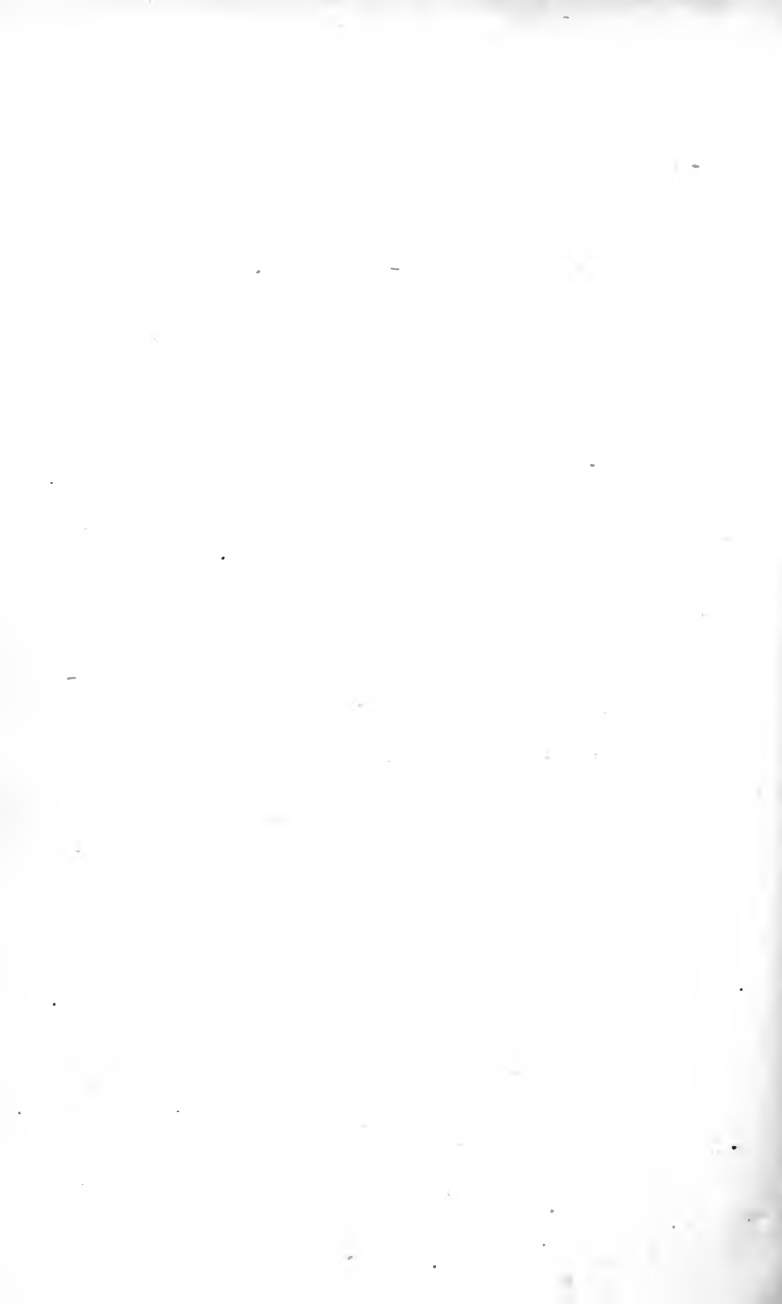
Dr. Grant took up his residence with them. The hopes which were buried seemed again to revive, like the flowers of spring, and old feelings began to creep over him. Still, sorrow had swept with a hand of desolation over the strings of his soul; and there were a few cords unstrung, as if from the cold blast of the North. Yet, he sat in the gallery with Louis, Zoe, and Estelle; and often Mr. Herndon came over of an evening, to listen to him, with his Turkish pipe, as he entertained his auditors with tales of the marvelous and strange from other lands.

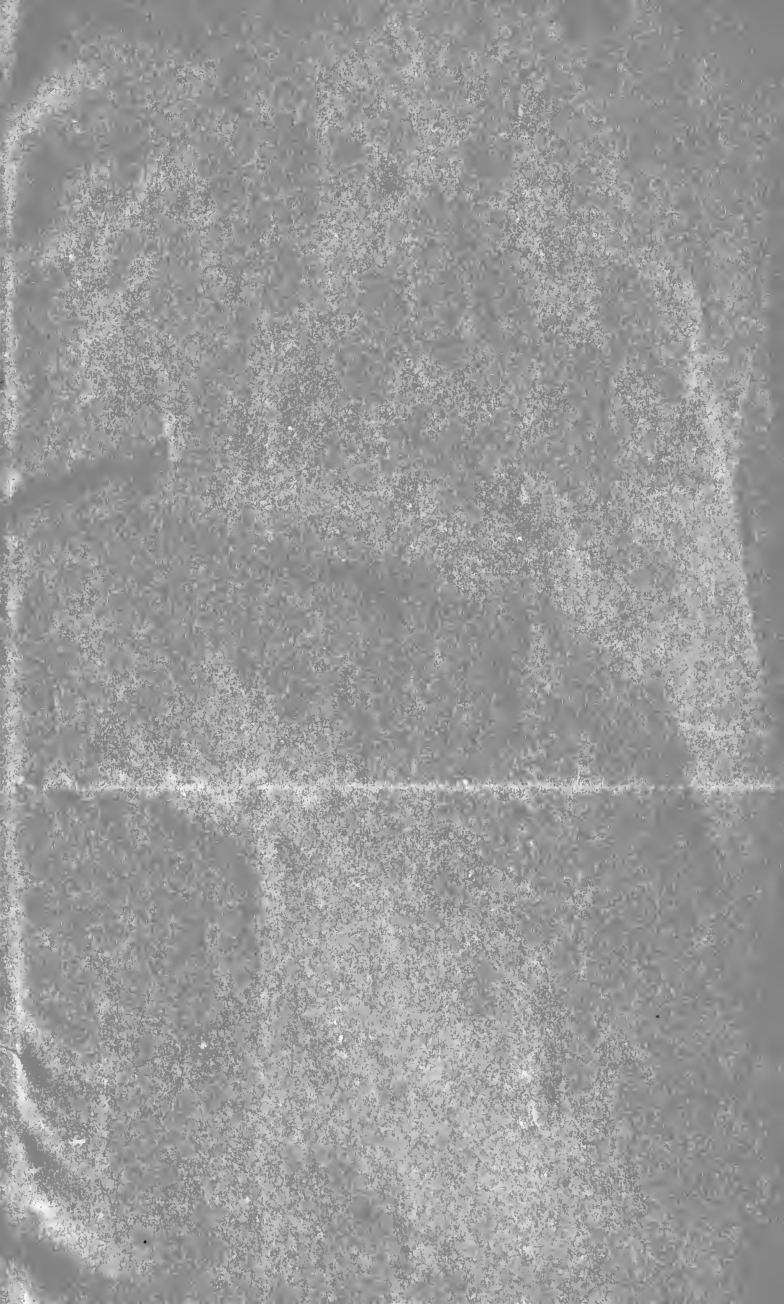
THE END.











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